

DIVA

A photograph of two women with short hair, one blonde and one brown, smiling and embracing each other. They are outdoors with greenery in the background.

THE LOVE ISSUE

BISEXUALITY

THE MOST RADICAL
SEXUAL IDENTITY?

35
DEFINITIONS
OF LEZ/BI LOVE

STELLA
DUFFY

"Good relationships
take hard work"

BLACK LESBIAN
LIVES BETWEEN
THE WARS

THE NEW
NORMAL

How lesbian youth fell
in love with married life

BETHANY BLACK

Trans lesbian comic plays
straight in new TV show

EXCLUSIVE

ALLEGRA McEVEDY
& JACK MONROE

Something's cooking...

Lesbians have had ENOUGH!

This is what you've told us about FREE lesbian online dating ..

"Free means 'Plenty of Fakes"

"I am happy to pay to meet women serious about meeting other women"

"I am happy to pay to meet genuine lesbians who are also looking for love"

"I WANT A QUALITY SITE WITH QUALITY WOMEN"

"I am happy to pay not to see all the same women I see on every free dating site"

"I am happy to pay to know the site is being monitored"



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- Yes you will meet women serious about meeting other women
- Yes you will meet genuine lesbians looking for love
- Yes we will provide a quality site with quality women
- No you won't see see all the same women you see on free lesbian dating sites
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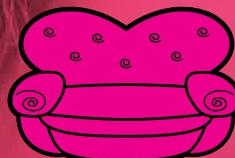
We had 120 people to our wedding and it was beautiful. We have been very happily together for five years with four kids, a dog, cat and fish. Thank you Pink Sofa. You literally changed all of our lives.

Kerrie and Sandy



I met my partner Annie on the Pink Sofa. Since then we have moved in together, started our own business and we got married in New York. It was the best day of our lives. We can't believe our luck in finding the perfect partner on Pink Sofa.

Kylee and Annie



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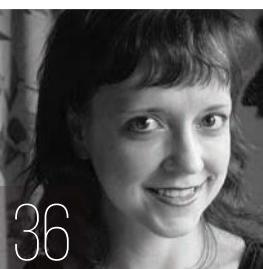
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Throughout the issue you will see this symbol, which indicates that there is digital content available related to that particular feature. You will be able to access this complementary content when you purchase our digital edition from divadigital.co.uk or directly through the DIVA branded app, available on the App Store, Google Play, Kindle Newsstand and Windows Store.

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LEZLIL+ROSE

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Ours used to be the love that dare not speak its name (and in some places in Britain and elsewhere in the world it sadly still is) but throughout the pages of this month's issue of DIVA, you'll read about a range of opinions on different experiences of same-sex love between women and their other loves. Our **cover stars Jack Monroe and Allegra McEvedy** (p54) told us about the traditional Greek idea of the four kinds of love and how they manifest in their lives. **Stella Duffy and her wife Shelley Silas** (p62) told us about love in a long-term relationship. Younger readers told us how they feel about **love and marriage** (p48) and, as ever, **the Rubbish Lesbian tells us like it is** (p22). As we went to press, we heard about a Tesco employee who told a lesbian customer that lesbians shouldn't have children, and that we should "die alone". Clearly, where lesbians are concerned, she's not feeling the love. Find out more about this story at tinyurl.com/TescoLesbians. Elsewhere in DIVA, we reflect **LGBT History Month** with a special focus on the women who had their lives changed through their experiences at **Greenham Common**, the trans lesbians who inspire author **Roz Kaveney** (p66) and the lives of **black gay and bisexual women between the wars** in London and New York (p44). Finally, if you're not already a subscriber, why not try a **DIVA subscription from as little as £7.99**, saving you 33% on the full cover price. The price includes free early delivery and exclusive subscriber-only covers.

Jane Czyzselska
DIVAMAG.CO.UK

NEXT MONTH



THE MARCH ISSUE on sale 26 February 2015

- Meet Desiree Akhavan: the "bisexual Iranian Lena Dunham"
- How to be a trans ally
- Picture perfect: the stories behind readers' wedding photos
- Radical lesbian feminist Finn Mackay takes on the hot-button issues
- Are The Dykeness Britain's best lesbian prog-rock tribute band?
- BFI Flare - DIVA's guide to this year's best lez, bi and trans movies

CONTACT US!



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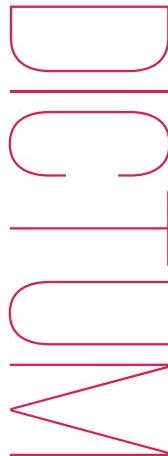
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DETAILS

DIVA



What is the love that dare not speak its name?

Editor Jane Czyzselska

"My love for Geraldine McEwan's *Miss Marple*"

Deputy editor Louise Carolin

"Well-dressed faggot Niles from TV comedy *Frasier*"

Editorial assistant Carrie Lyell

"Taylor Swift's back catalogue"

Designer Fernando Safont

"My crush on Tony Blair. Shame on me"

Music editor Sarah-Jane Roberts

Books editor Eden Carter Wood

Film editor Joanna Benecke

Travel editor Lucy Fry

Diary editor Dora Mortimer

Art editor Anna McNay

Sex/life editor Anna Sansom

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Star Letter

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

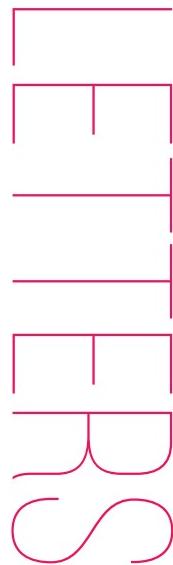
Catherine Murray (Women beware women?, Diatribe, January) has written about something I've been thinking about lately. I am making a point not to comment negatively on women on the television when our children are in the room. My partner and I try to model confidence and teach our teenage boys that women are to be respected. It was lovely to see India Knight being interviewed on TV about her new book. She was wearing trainers, hurray! Today I have just read Caitlin Moran's column in the Saturday Times magazine. She says she has finally decided not to wear heels anymore. It's taken her decades to see the light. I think women should make a point of wearing shoes that they can walk and run in. For me, that is flat shoes, for other women that may be heels and, thankfully, we have the freedom to choose. For 2015, DIVA, let's start a campaign where women support each other publicly by saying and writing supportive things. It would be wonderful if the weekly magazines didn't write articles about someone's weight or what they wore and instead wrote articles about what they're doing and what they have to say. The campaign could be called "Women Supporting Women" or "Women Are Friends".

ANNA LANGTON, Northampton

ED: Great idea, Anna! Watch out for a new weekly column, coming soon at divamag.co.uk.



WIN!



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DIVA MAGAZINE

Spectrum House, Unit M
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London NW5 1LP
United Kingdom

THE CLAUSTROPHIC CLOSET

I'm 33 and have only identified as a gay girl for around 10 months; since the breakdown of my marriage I've been able to start to feel comfortable in my own skin for the first time in my life. I'm writing to you because I've gained strength and useful information from DIVA over this past year, but I'm hoping you might do a piece on women in my position. I'm positive there must be more women who have been living a lie for so long and are desperate for some way to begin to emerge from this claustrophobic closet that we find ourselves in.

I'm lucky, I have made several close lesbian friends (PS Any tips on moving out of the "friend zone"? LOL) and also have a gay sister to talk to... but I still haven't "come out" officially to the rest of my family or ex-husband. I feel like I'm leading a double life right now and I'm too scared to be honest about who I am. When I'm out with my gay friends, I feel completely normal and like I'm "me" but when the night is over, I have to go back to the fake me. I'm also a mother of two, which means severe restrictions on any new relationship; girls just don't want to know when there are kids on the scene. So I guess what I'm asking, is for you to help girls in my position out, let us know we're not alone.

CAROLINE

AW SHUCKS, IT'S NOTHING

Thank you so much for all that you do – for unreservedly and fiercely providing an amazing diversity of role models, for introducing us to real women with grey hair, or brown skin, for showing us real, fully-functioning and inspirational queer women in every single issue. As a young queer feminist, your magazine inspires me every month; women like Aderonke Apata prove that while the struggle is not over, nor is the solidarity and determination of queer women all over the world. Your feature on older lesbians was especially exciting because there is so much to learn from mature queer women like Linda Bellos and Monica Beadle; they are a piece of living history and have fought so many battles for us to be where we are today.

It is so exciting that I can find daring and provocative articles on my supermarket shelf (or have it shipped to me when I'm at university in Canada). Thank you for bringing queer activism, feminist discourse and powerful, successful and diverse women out of the confines of Tumblr and into mainstream media. Thank you for hard-hitting questions and amazing research that inspires young, queer journalists like me.

CICELY BLAIN, thetalon.ca

CORRECTION

Oops! Last month we accidentally reversed Rose and Rosie's names in the fashion credits for every picture. (We got them right in the interview. Whew.)

Opinions expressed by correspondents and contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of DIVA magazine or its publishers.



Last month's cover stars, Rose (brunette) and Rosie (blonde). See, we do know really...



TWITTER

@DIVAmagazine

@islamctear

@DIVAmagazine @RoseEllenDix @RoxeteraRibbons if you look up perfect in the dictionary you'd find these covers.

@lssyLibby

@RoseEllenDix and @RoxeteraRibbons' @DIVAmagazine cover now pride of place on my wardrobe!

@purplelillith

Loved the star letter by Margaret. In my sixties too but not sitting around either.

@Gbow_

First time buying a @DIVAmagazine! How could I resist when @RoxeteraRibbons and @RoseEllenDix are on the cover!?

@TheOuting1

Thank you @DIVAmagazine for another entertaining, informative and sometimes 'make me blush' year of #lesbian life on your pages! #mustread

@MedievalMmeMim

The gift of acceptance: Mum buying

JOIN US TODAY!

twitter.com/divamagazine

@DIVAmagazine for me while at the supermarket #holidayspirit

@Steffi_Alexa

I want to sit down with a cup of tea and @DIVAmagazine but I seem to have misplaced it. Guess I'll have to do latin revision instead.

@sparklezara

My nan got me a subscription to @DIVAmagazine for Xmas so I'm taking that as proof she's over the "oh it's just a phase" nonsense woohoo!

@ciamarsh

Bought @DIVAmagazine for the first time in ages – it's SO GOOD and thank you for always writing about 'lesbian AND bisexual women'.

@RebeccaCordell

Misogynistic women and homophobic lesbians. Great article in @DIVAmagazine by Catherine Murray on why women continue to self-sabotage.

OBITUARY: STELLA YOUNG (1982–2014)

Stella Young was a self-confessed wheelchair-using "crip" from Australia. She was many things – a journalist, comedian, writer, educator, queer, activist, feminist, atheist, broadcaster, political animal, knitter and kick-ass communicator. She was definitely not an inspiration – well, that's what she's told over 1.5 million viewers worldwide in her 2014 TED talk, "I'm not your inspiration – thank you very much".

In only 32 years, Stella has accumulated a lifetime of achievements – from being voted Best Newcomer at the Melbourne Comedy Festival, to being editor of the ABC's disability website Ramp-Up, she was fast becoming a nationally renowned media figure beloved for her refreshing "tell it like it is" insights and her "nail on the head" witticisms.

When a friend of Stella's recently died of the same impairment, social media was filled with images of snowflakes. Stella responded by making it clear how she wanted to be remembered: "In case I get hit by a bus tomorrow, I want to make something clear. I am not a snowflake. I am not a sweet, infantilising symbol of the fragility of life. I am a strong, fierce, flawed, adult woman. I plan to remain that way in life and in death."

Stella's family have asked for those wishing to pay tribute to donate to Domestic Violence Victoria (givewow.com.au/dvvic).

LIZ CARR

Pleased to
meet you!



NAME & AGE: LAUREN O'ROURKE, 18

FROM: GREATER MANCHESTER, UK

OCCUPATION: STUDENT

IDENTITY: LESBIAN



Every issue, we invite one of our readers to tell us about her relationship with DIVA.

WHAT MADE YOU START READING DIVA?

I saw Kaelyn and Lucy on a cover and a video they did with DIVA (and Rose and Rosie). I recently saw Rose and Rosie on the January issue front cover and made everyone buy it. Ever since then I've been addicted.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A READER?

Only a few months but I've already bought a subscription and I can't wait for more mags.

PRINT OR DIGITAL?

Both but mainly print every month!

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT DIVA?

I like how original it is compared to other magazines. I love how it represents lesbian, bi and queer women who may not have any other ways of accessing information about ourselves, it gives us representation and a voice. Being a queer teenager there isn't much representation anywhere but DIVA magazine makes me feel less alone and more supported.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

I'd love more popular YouTuber couples, more of Orange Is The New Black. Some "agony aunts" or just more on being queer and young. Or just more of the struggles of being queer and how to cope with it, like being out in public. Definitely more on bi/trans erasure in the LGBT community.

HOW MANY PEOPLE READ YOUR COPY?

My girlfriend, my mum, my sister, anyone who is nearby.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR COPY WHEN YOU'VE READ IT?

I keep them and rip out any pictures of hot women to put up on my walls.

WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON THE COVER AND WHY?

WANT TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

Send a photo and your answers to the questions above to letters@divamag.co.uk

I'd love to put Poussey of OITNB because she's so hot and the role she plays in the show is amazing. Or all the OITNB cast because they're such strong and inspiring people. Laverne Cox is also an amazing trans woman from the show (and so hot) and she is doing so well for the trans community right now, it's incredible.



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I love your rage



Ever read the ReSearch anthology *Angry Women*? It's like an illuminated manuscript of feminist interviews – bell

hooks, Annie Sprinkle – all packed in with their deft irreverence. It was foisted upon me by a friend, a gay man, who was trying to make space in his minimal flat. He was like, "Take it, take it". I was like, "No wanna". A few days later he sent a link to the Future Feminist Tea Party, who were running an event about the book. I'd been buttered up. I took it and inside read the following: "In the 1960s the expression 'Angry Young Man' came into vogue but there was no corresponding 'Angry Young Woman' role model."

Actually there was: activists of all stripes were labelled "angry", presumably by the lizard types who were often in power then, as they often are now. But what that quotation is really getting at is the implicit respect in the term "Angry Young Man". What it really means is Angry James Dean, angry pretty boy who will grow up to become an investment banker, angry human who embodies the western idea of "normal", whose anger is directed at nothing in particular and can be modelled on dummies in the windows of Topshop.

Try to see that in the rather more patronising terms "angry black wom-

an" or "angry students". Indeed, cast your mind back to the student protests of 2011, when Topshop responded to the notion of free education for the general populace with a t-shirt sporting a double entendre: "The students are revolting."

The conventions of writing a magazine column mean that I must prepare these things at least a month before they will be read, so cast your mind over whatever injustice is filling your Twitter feed – at the time of writing it is #Ferguson, #Garner, #icantbreathe – to see how anger is met by the people clamouring for your vote. The first reaction is always to increase security; then to let out the riot police; then to hope that you're too scared to do anything else.

Would that this were solely a characteristic of the state. But the same logic – that you are not worthy enough to be angry – is repeated in school, by parents and in relationships too, largely by people who say they love you. In fact, I wonder if the classroom and the buggy aren't the first places we learn to suppress our rage. Arbitrary rules about school uniform not to your liking? Here's a detention. Angry about the way a teacher made you feel like shit? Internal exclusion (which, for those who went to nicer schools than mine, is like a prison for children within a prison for children).

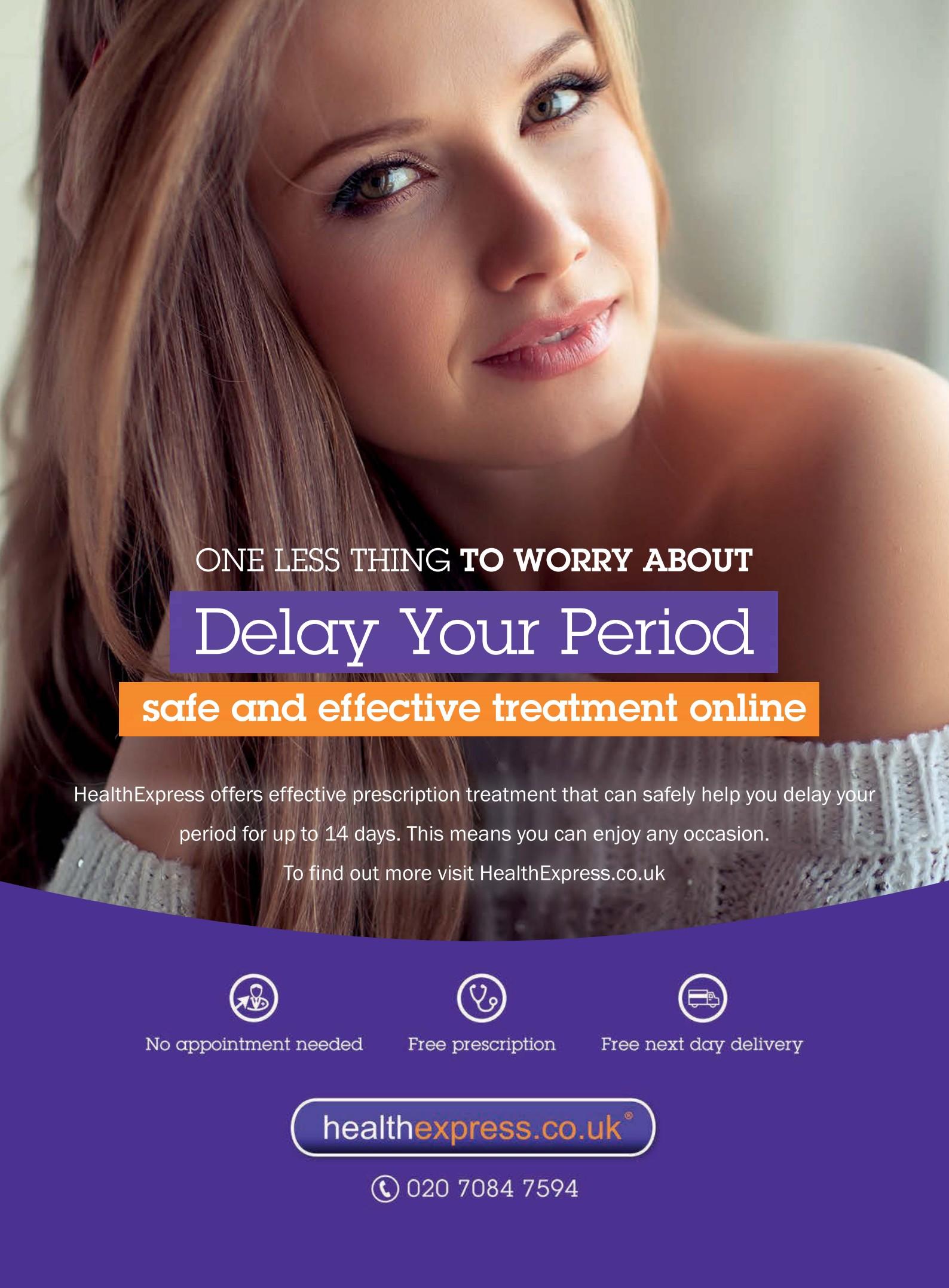
Then, lucky you, you grow up and you go out dancing and meet someone who is ostensibly your friend. But

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CREATIVE
ANGER
SHOULD BE
RESPECTED,
SAYS JAY
BERNARD

then you notice that you can't express anything but happiness and joy at their every action. Maybe you've met this kind of person? A sort of walking, talking, micro-totalitarian state, who will cut you off at the slightest indiscretion: maybe you want that fifty quid back or maybe you don't appreciate waking up to the gory tampons they leave haemorrhaging in the loo. They don't tolerate your anger because deep down, they have no respect for you. You walk around behind them like a starving shadow, wondering why no-one else seems to speak out either. And then you do, and it takes days for you to wash the blood out of your hair.

There's the destructive, irresponsible anger, the kind of rage that really does need a 12-step program. And then there's the justified, irreverent and creative rage that is really a sign of self-respect. I don't think this gives a free pass to everyone who has ever seen red, but I do think it's telling that every week we can watch a video in which someone is murdered and fully expect that everything will carry on. Or, that we've reached a stage where at every demonstration someone will be carrying a banner saying: "I can't believe I still have to protest this shit." Or, that if you find yourself recounting how you've been fucked over by someone, your friends are likely to look at you in weary sympathy; acknowledging that anger by taking action scares them, and it scares you too. **D**

See how
anger is
met by
the people
clamouring
for your
vote



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Lesbian lives: There's more to being a lesbian than sex acts

Of sex acts and identities



It happens all the time and it's infuriating. You say something innocent about your partner and some people

will immediately imagine two women frantically scissoring and treat you with either prurience or suspicion as a result.

In a similar vein, gay men I know say that in the same kinds of situations it's as if they can actually see images of men engaged in anal sex whirring through the mind-cogs of heterosexuals when introduced at parties. In work settings this is embarrassing at best and obstructive at worst.

Take the recent exchange I had with a PR who told me she wouldn't permit DIVA to ask questions about her talent's sexual identity because she knew the star in question wouldn't want to talk about her "private life". Somewhat confused, I assured her that DIVA had no interest in her ward's private life, sexual positions etc, we merely wanted to ask her to acknowledge her same-sex relationship in interview with us, as she had recently done in a national

SEXUAL IDENTITY IS NOT THE SAME AS SEXUAL ACTIVITY, SAYS JANE CZYZSELSKA

newspaper. As DIVA is a magazine for lesbian and bisexual readers, this seemed to us a reasonable request. Not so, apparently. The PR reiterated her concern about the "sexual line of questioning" we were pursuing and I tried (again) to explain that a question about a person's sexual identity is not code for information about their sexual activity.

We eventually managed to come to an agreement but the back and forth on the subject is not an uncommon experience with celebrity gatekeepers.

I'm slightly playing devil's advocate here. I know there's sometimes good reason for concern about the intrusive journalists who focus on a star's sex life and perceived "peculiarities" at the expense of their work, which is certainly not DIVA's approach.

Before the 19th century, sex acts were not synonymous with a sexual identity. In other words, homosexuality is a social construction. As such acts became regulated by law, the identity of "the homosexual" emerged in resistance to these laws. In the past, the interest lay in what you were doing rather than who was doing it.

Now that the laws have gradually

Sexual identities were constructed in order to assert rights

changed, perhaps the perceived difference levied between straight and gay folks will have less currency.

The modern idea of being "born gay" has less traction when we consider the idea of how sexual identities were constructed in order to assert rights.

Another way to look at it is, regardless of sexual identity people may perform the same sexual acts, but the demarcation between different sexual groups is quite artificial. There is something much bigger about sexual identity that includes but goes beyond sex.

A friend recently told me part of her sexual identity is that she prefers the company of women but that when people know you're gay – whether or not they're gay themselves – they tend to shrink you into sex acts rather than the things you like doing or the particularities of your emotional life.

I wonder if it's time for a revision in the way we ourselves think about our identities and others' in same-sex relationships. If we want people to change the way they respond to us and treat us, perhaps we could be the harbingers of that change? **D**

O'HOOLEY & TIDOW

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★★★★★

FEBRUARY

19 **HUDDERSFIELD** SLAITHWAITE WATERSHED

MARCH

01 **SETTLE** VICTORIA HALL

06 **BRISTOL** FOLKHOUSE*

07 **BURY** THE MET*

08 **LONDON** ST PANCRAS OLD CHURCH*

12 **HEBDEN BRIDGE** TRADES CLUB

13 **WHITCHURCH** NORTH SHROPSHIRE FOLK @ TALBOT THEATRE

14 **BROSELEY** BIRCHMEADOW CENTRE

16 **SPAIN: BENALMADENA** COSTA DEL FOLK

20 **NEWBURY** NEW GREENHAM ARTS

21 **LEWES** UNION MUSIC @ THE CON CLUB

22 **HITCHIN** FOLK CLUB

27 **STOWMARKET** JOHN PEEL CENTRE

28 **CANTERBURY** FOLK IN THE BARN

29 **BOURNEMOUTH** FOLK CLUB

APRIL

10 **LINCOLN** DRILL HALL

11 **DURHAM** WITHAM HALL

18 **MACHYNLLETH Y TABERNACL**

MAY

01 **STROUD** SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS

02 **GUILDFORD** TRINITY FOLK FESTIVAL

15 **MATLOCK BATH** THE FISHPOND

17 **SHEFFIELD** FIRTH HALL (WITH OUT ALOUD CHOIR)

22 **MANCHESTER** CHORLTON ARTS FESTIVAL

JUNE

05 **LEICESTER** GUILDHALL

06 **DORSET** OSMINGTON VILLAGE HALL

13 **OXFORD** OLD FIRE STATION

19 **BRISTOL** DOWNEND FOLK CLUB

20 **WIVELISCOMBE** SILVER STREET SESSIONS @ COTLEIGH BREWERY

26 **SALTAIRE** LIVE ROOM @ CAROLINE SOCIAL CLUB

* International Women's Day Concert with Lady Maisery & Grace Petrie





Buenos notches

CHARLOTTE COOPER PUTS HER SEXUAL REGRETS TO BED, WITH THE HELP OF HER GIRLFRIEND



I was 18 years old when Mum died. Her name was Rosemary. We didn't have enough time together, she didn't live long

enough to know me as an adult and I still have stressful recurring dreams about this. But what Mum did instil in me was a sense that I am basically alright, basically loveable. I think about this quite a bit because I work as a therapist with loads of people who feel extremely unloveable. There are theories about why this might be so, and one of them is about how early care-givers' attachments form the basis of your self-esteem. This is why I think Mum is responsible for the glowing and unbreakable rock of self-worth that I am lucky to have internalised. Mum really loved me.

Love can look like a lot of things. Last year my boyfriend got me a teddy wrapped in cellophane on Valentine's Day, after I asked him very sweetly. I'd never had one before and I think they're funny and stupid, I get sentimental for a big red bow. He obliged. Love is a voice on the end of the phone when you need someone to listen. Limerence, or romantic infatuation, can feel a lot like love, and falling in

love can make you feel completely unhinged. The love my mum taught me is a quiet and tender feeling of strength, solidarity, acceptance. It's not at all flashy. I was thinking about this kind of love just this week. There's some backstory, which I'll explain first.

I didn't start fucking women until I was well into my 20s, which felt ancient at the time and now looks pretty young. I felt that I had failed at being a dyke because I'd never acted on earlier thoughts and feelings. I believed nobody could possibly be interested in me because I was, and am, fat as well as being a Kinsey five. I didn't fit the available narratives that people at the time used to make sense of their sexuality. I was a right weirdo. Eventually I had a flurry of activity and then I met my girlfriend. I've had occasional dalliances since then, I am poly, but I maintain a lingering regret that there aren't more notches on my bedpost.

I told my girlfriend this story last Sunday morning as we were lying in bed together. I had a good old cry, these shameful regrets have tormented me for years! She stroked my head and reminded me that there are good reasons why I started later than I'd wanted to, specifically the unholy trinity of homophobia, biphobia and fatphobia, mixed in with a giant dose of sexism, grief and struggle. It wasn't

because I'm a shitty queer. Then she leapt up and said, "Listen to this!" gleefully. Within seconds she'd found a recording online of KD Lang doing Constant Craving. She whacked it on and started dancing round the room.

I wish no ill on KD Lang or her fans, but I must confess that hers is not the music that moves me most. In this instance, however, it reduced me to a barely functioning wreck. I don't even know if hysteria is real but I was howling with laughter, wailing and kind of speechless all at once, I could barely move or breathe. It was amazingly cathartic. My love had soothed my troubles and vanished them away by lovingly taking the piss out of me, lesbian-style.

When I recovered she said: "Let's draw the notches who might have been." So we sat at the kitchen table and we drew imaginary pictures of those I'd shagged in a parallel universe. I invited my friends to draw some notches for me if they felt like it, and that invitation extends to you as well, dear reader. I stopped feeling so alone with my past and appreciated what I have instead. When I thought about how my girlfriend had handled my notch regret, I thought: "Wow, this is what love looks like." ☙

charlotte@divamag.co.uk

Love can look like a lot of things



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 ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT
More information on p5 | divadigital.co.uk

MAGIC MIRROR

An eloquent, engaging and energetic performer, Evan Ifekoya plays with traditional concepts of gender and sexuality and queers them using a variety of mediums. Originally studying textiles, Evan created interventions in public spaces including a tapestry on a staircase and large-scale knitting with broom handles, before moving on to fine art. Now a performance artist (who prefers non-binary pronouns), they draw on their different skills to create something unique that'll make you think. "Art is a vehicle," says Evan. "It's a way of thinking through and

THE LONDON-BASED ARTIST AIMS TO QUEER TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF RACE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

coping with temporary existence."

Influenced by daily life – "What I read in the news and what I see out on the streets" – Evan queers popular imagery by appropriating material from historical archives and contemporary society. "I work with things that are already quite familiar to people and I try and subvert them in some way," Evan says. "For example, I made a video that was a spoof of Sesame Street, where I talk to a kid about gender identity. You wouldn't usually see something like that, so that is my way of exploring the potential of that

space; of queering the image as we know it."

Evan hopes their work will make audiences laugh – and feel a bit uncomfortable, too. "I hope to create work that acts as a mirror in some way and allows people to see something of themselves and how they interact with the world." ⚪

Evan is exhibiting two works as part of the 30 Years Of The Future exhibition, which runs until 1 February at Castlefield Gallery in Manchester.

[@evan_ife](http://castlefieldgallery.co.uk)

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Love stinks



Love is a strange thing. I've never known anything else in my life that can bring me such great joy and then such utter disappoint-

ment. Apart from the Star Wars films. Of course, scientists may say that love is simply a matter of biology or chemistry or some complicated stuff and such, but logic can never quite explain why love lingers on in our memories far beyond when it should.

I was on the train the other day and suddenly felt completely and utterly sick. The effect was so immediate that I genuinely thought I would vomit on myself. Oddly, the cause of my nausea wasn't the smell of the toilet, rather it was the overpowering scent of Dewberry that was clinging to a fellow passenger for dear life.

To be fair to The Body Shop, it's not that I have a particular gripe against the fragrance itself, what makes me hate it is the fact it brings back memories of my first ever love. Ok, *love* may be stretching it slightly; it was more of a teenage infatuation. And if I'm very honest, it was less infatuation and more gratitude. You see, the woman who drenched herself in Dewberry was the woman with whom I shared my first proper kiss. What I remember

most of all about her isn't the kiss itself, I suspect the event was rather rushed and probably more awkward than enjoyable. My abiding memory is that she had everything Dewberry. Hand cream, foot cream, shower gel. You could almost see the scent wafting around her, like the old Bisto advert.

And that's what made me feel sick when I caught a whiff of it in the train, because the overwhelming emotion when I think of that time is humiliation. She dumped me shortly after the kiss even though, in truth, there was no real relationship to be dumped from. But it hurt like hell at the time and even now, over 20 years later, the smell of Dewberry makes me feel like a complete loser.

Similar olfactory reasons are why I refuse to allow incense into my house, because even the most cursory sniff of the stuff reminds me of the first woman I slept with. She was, I suppose, in the truest sense my first love. Although, once again, gratitude was certainly part of the reason I fell for her. She loved incense; I suspect she would have filled an inhaler with incense if she could have. And then, in a pattern that was to continue for several years, she also dumped me, this time in true lesbian drama circumstances.

Less than 24 hours after we first slept together, an event that I was

THIS
POWERFUL
EMOTION
HAS SUSAN
CALMAN BY
THE NOSE

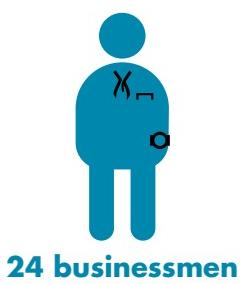
still delirious with joy about, she called me and asked if she'd left her girlfriend's gloves at my house. Which led me to ask the awkward question, "But I thought I was your girlfriend?" I learned a valuable lesson that day – don't get naked without asking a few questions of the person you are getting naked with. And this dumping is what's led to my hatred of incense, because it reminds me of trying to rip a pay-phone off the wall of a student flat in 1993, while shouting: "She can shove her fucking gloves up her fucking arse!"

Of course, it does work the other way; smells can make me happy. For example, I love the way my cat's paws smell when they've been asleep and sweating. They're like warm digestive biscuits. And I love the smell of my wife's neck in the morning. Oddly enough, she also smells like warm digestive biscuits.

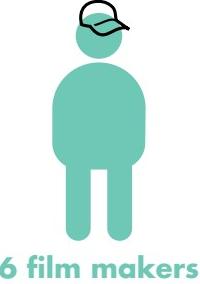
Which is why I've started carrying a packet of McVitie's with me at all times. Just in case I smell something that makes me sad. Digestive biscuits are to Dewberry what garlic is to a vampire. I'm ready for the memories now. And even better, I always have a snack with me. ☺

She had everything Dewberry. Hand cream, foot cream, shower gel

Catch Susan Calman at London's Soho Theatre in February. Visit sohotheatre.com for further details and tickets.



24 businessmen



6 film makers



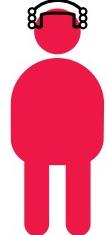
14 in security



45 IT managers



30 in admin



7 lawyers



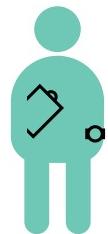
11 pilots



8 models



22 bar tenders



15 in logistics



3 chefs



24 in hospitality



16 actors



9 doctors



36 in finance



9 armed forces



7 builders



19 teachers



36 students



26 engineers

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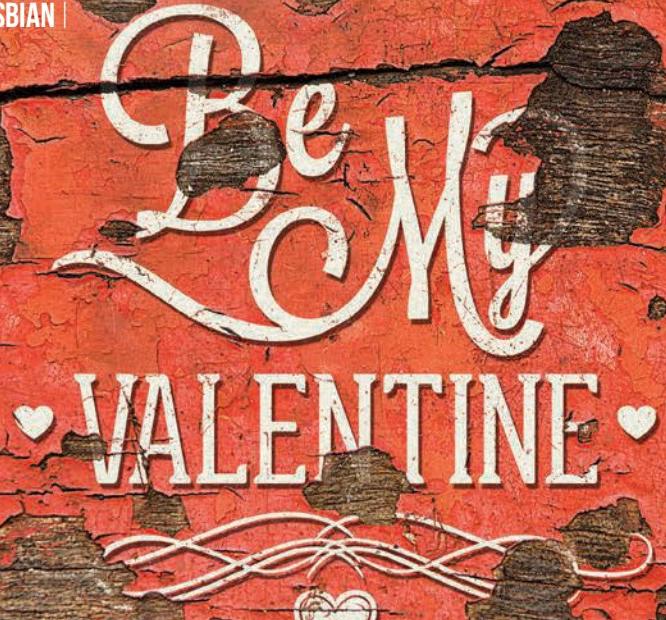
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What love is (and what it isn't)



Cards on the table, I find traditional Valentine's sentiments revoltingly saccharine. I'm talking about

those dreadful "Love is ..." cartoons, in which an infantile straight couple are pictured holding hands and gazing into each other's eyes to illustrate various pat phrases. I was the unhappy recipient of a "Love is ... never having to say you're sorry" card from a boyfriend when I was 16 and found it both factually incorrect, and, because at that point he had nothing to be sorry for, ever so slightly menacing.

Typical Valentine's card sentiments are generic and grand, but also kind of vague. I mean, is love really wishing on a new moon together? If my girlfriend wandered wistfully to the window and summoned, "Come, my love, to the window where we shall wish upon this new moon together," I'd reply, "Calm down, Patrick Moore, Jeanette Winterston's on Question Time". As for "Love is ... two Valentines entwined together forever", that's not love, it's a sexual misadventure that'll end at A&E with a conscious uncoupling. And if "Love is ... counting her freckles" then my dermatologist, Dr Kapur, and I have been going steady for the last two years.

My issue with such idealised depic-

**SARAH
WESTWOOD
SETS OUT TO
CAPTURE THE
ESSENCE OF
LOVE. EXPECT
HAIRBALLS**

tions is that they don't do justice to the subtleties and intricacies of love. What's great about love is that it isn't predictable or malleable, sometimes it's deliberately difficult. Book a "romantic" meal for your Valentine, in the perfect setting and complete with champers, and love will be a no-show. The pressure to stage romance can be counter-productive, as if a passing Cupid has observed your efforts and deliberately shat on them mid-flight like a petulant seagull. Love is more likely to wash over you in simple unrehearsed moments, such as watching your girlfriend emptying the dishwasher, hearing her address the cat in her special "cat voice" or simply looking over to see her honking with laughter at a serial killer documentary. So to me the idea of an obligatory day for romance is as uninspiring as the prose in those greetings cards.

But many people love buying cards, so I would like to propose a new set of cartoons based more firmly in reality. Love is ... watching a TV programme your girlfriend is excited about, without spoiling her enjoyment by sighing resentfully and pointing all the plot flaws. Love is ... not fleeing in horror when a stomach bug on Christmas Eve forces her to drop to her knees on her mum's landing and forcibly heave a dozen oatcakes into a perilously shallow washing up bowl. Love is ... putting

her pyjamas on the radiator. Love is ... stepping out of a warm car into the icy wind of the hard shoulder to cheer on your girlfriend as she attempts to top up the windshield washer fluid like a scene from *It's A Knockout*. Love is ... driving around in that same car without complaining that it reeks of washer fluid because in her haste she forgot to put the lid back on and it leaked all over the boot. Love is ... a buoyant: "Well, I thought it was really good". Love is ... offering to clean up the cat's hairball because you know that if she even claps eyes on that tubular mass she'll dry heave and then cry. Love is ... buying a bag of corn nuts for your girlfriend in the knowledge that when she munches on them she will sound like a pony eating an apple. Love is ... attempting to eat corn nuts quietly, or better still, not at all.

Love isn't a conceit. It's not moonlight and roses. Sometimes it's messy and imperfect, and that's what makes it so good. The un-pretty truth about love is that it's about gritted teeth as much as it is wide-eyed wonder. Yes, it's the big life-defining moments, but it's also lots of little joys every day. Love is ... heart-swelling pride, stomach-dropping fear and sputum-spraying laughter, wrapped in a tartan blanket. No doubt you have your own examples of love in mind, so, love is ... whatever it means to you. **D**

**Love is ...
putting her
pyjamas
on the
radiator**

PUT A RING ON IT 4

... A FLEET OF HARLEYS,
SANDY TOKSVIG OFFICIATING,
RECEPTION AT THE VIBRATOR
PALACE BAR AND GRILL ...

WE CAN'T
EVEN AFFORD
A ROUND AT THE
CLIT & BISCUIT!



DING-DANGY DING!
DING-DONGY DANG!

WEDDING MARCH

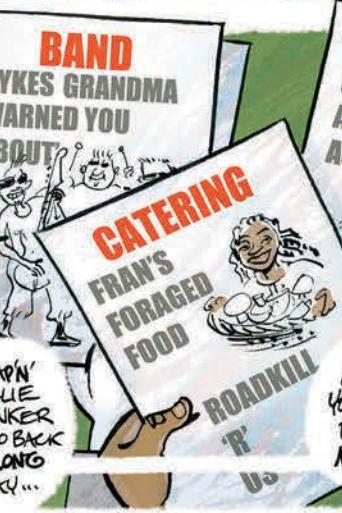
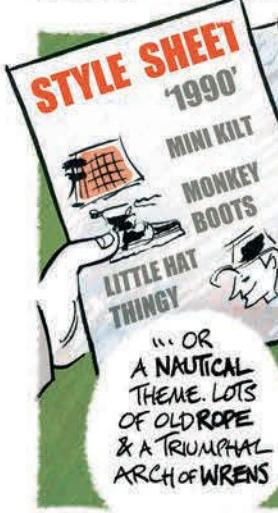
Z

THIS'LL
SORT
IT...

Z

'LO AUNTIE
STUDS!

'LO
AUNTIE
STUDS...



PERSON OF THE MONTH

ROBYN EXTON

In the tech world, dominated by men, the founder of lesbian dating app Dattch is an inspiration. Since appearing in a feature on young entrepreneurs in DIVA last year, the bisexual 27-year-old has been working non-stop, and we're not the only ones who've noticed – her story is one of three to be featured in a new Channel 4 documentary about British app designers. *Billion Dollar Dreams*, which hits screens later this year, sees Exton's pitch to investors in San Francisco. The Evening Standard says: "Of the three hopefuls featured in the programme, she comes across best: enthusiastic, witty, likeable." Well done, Robyn!



CELEBRITY TWEETS

@harto

Watching "How It's Made: Wool" is unravelling the very fabric of my life.

@AnnaRichardso

WHAT THE...?? I can't cope with the cliffhanger!!! #lasttangoinalifax

@heatherpeace

Just tried to use my nectar card to get in the gym. Same receptionist as the one I spoke to with a face full of toothpaste last week.

@EllenPage

The Queen honoured a political who blamed Hurricane Katrina and AIDS on LGBT people. Fuck that.

@TheEllenShow

What does Thor wear under his shorts? Thunderpants.

@lspraggan

Going to the darts looks like a right laugh. No one will frown at me for drinking stout there either... I'm going!

@zoelyons

Tearing the sudoku from the paper and placing it in a coat pocket for later suddenly the puzzle of what it is to be middle aged was solved.

@stelliduff

I just stopped myself dancing alone to busker in sth ken subway. #daftme



With Valentine's coming up and Easter eggs already on sale, we're thinking about chocolate even more than usual. But we're not interested in the cheap stuff from your local newsagent – we're talking ethical exquisiteness. Original Beans is full of taste but free from industrial sugar, animal proteins, child labour, unfair trade, poverty exploitation and many more "ingredients" found in many well-known chocs. Grab a bar of this, and you're not just taking care of your tastebuds, but the environment too. For every bar sold, local farmers are able to plant a cacao or shade tree, improving their livelihoods and the integrity of bio diversity hotspots, and slowing down climate change too. Delicious.

originalbeans.com

MEDIAWATCH

WITH CARRIE LYELL

GOOD NEWS FOR LESBIANS



In a world saturated with depressing stories, it's nice to have something to smile about for a change. And what beats a good love story? Not much, it seems. Last month, visitors to our website were over the moon with the news that Sue Perkins and Anna Richardson were officially a thing, making it the most read story on divamag.co.uk. And across on pinknews.co.uk, it was their most read story of the past decade. "Congratulations Sue Perkins and Anna Richardson," they said. "Love is stronger than hate and this shows with the popularity of this article." The couple have been together for a while, but only went public recently when Anna told Lorraine Kelly: "I was with my boyfriend for nearly 20 years and I've known Sue on the circuit, but about a year and a half ago we met at a party. I was recently single and we just... all I can say, there was an understanding between us and for me the planets aligned. I just thought, this person, it's not even about a woman, this person is absolutely extraordinary." No doubt there'll be some of you wondering why two people are spending their time together in news, but for as long as there are lesbian and bisexual women in the public eye who are afraid to go public about their sexuality or their relationship because of backlash – real or imagined – we'll keep writing about it.

@Seej

OUR FAVOURITE TV DOUBLE ACT ARE BACK ON OUR SCREENS WITH THEIR FIRST CHAT SHOW IN 15 YEARS... DIVA CORNERED THEM FOR A CHAT.

DIVA: How would you sum up the new show?

MEL: This is going to sound really twee, but it's like hosting a jolly in your house. We're welcoming people in and giving them snacks.

SUE: It's basically just a couple of mates messing around and eating everything in the studio. We love being in each other's company and just chatting. The producers are saying in our ears, "Can you stop talking now?" It's like budgies. They have to put cloth over us to stop us talking. But anything you can do to make our easy job sound really hard would be most appreciated.

It's been 15 years since your last chat show. What gave you the idea of bringing it back?

MEL: For the last two or three years, in our slightly shambolic way, we've tried to sit down and say, "We should do something live again". We love live because of the roughness round the edges, the excitement, the madness, and stuff going off on all sorts of weird tangents.

SUE: When you work live in front of an audience, aiming for perfection is pointless. But what you can achieve are these magic moments when you get heckled or something unpredictable appears.

Can things go wrong?

SUE: Absolutely. Sometimes on Light Lunch the producers would whisper in our ears, "We've only got three seconds left – oh no, it's actually 20 seconds. Think of another question." At which point, Mel would always go slightly glazed, put on a rictus grin and ask, "Got any pets?"

Does the format work well for you as a double act?

MEL: It's a format where we work well together. It's always quite nice to have two people interviewing rather than one. You've always got back-up.

SUE: It's like velociraptors in Jurassic Park – two of them working as a team to rip someone to pieces. It's a "double Paxo" because one is never enough.

Are you nervous about the response?

SUE: Yes. I've started calling it the "Farewell Tour" in case it fails. I'll say, "Mel and I will always love each other, but it's goodbye". But if it works, we'll rebrand it and say, "Well, hello again". It's like the Rolling Stones. Every tour is a farewell tour.

Mel and Sue is on ITV, weekdays at 4pm.

For more TV highlights see reviews, p34.



60 SECONDS WITH...

MEL AND SUE



Don't have a date for Valentine's Day? Don't worry. We're streaming of a great night in with Roku. This lovely little gadget plugs into your TV, giving you access to a fantastic selection of free, subscription and rental channels including Netflix and Amazon Instant Video, so you

and your friends can watch Orange Is The New Black or Transparent without all huddling around your laptop. It takes a matter of minutes to set up, and is controlled by the remote or with your smartphone. You can even beam photos, songs and videos straight from your phone or tablet. Who needs a woman? We're in love.

roku.com/uk





ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p5 | divadigital.co.uk

Queer Contact Festival is back!

SEASONED
PROS RUB
SHOULDERS
WITH NEW
ARTISTS AGAIN
IN A FANTASTIC
CELEBRATION
OF THE BEST
QUEER ARTS
AND CULTURE,
IN LGBT
HISTORY
MONTH. DIVA
SCOURED THE
PROGRAMME
AND PICKED
OUT OUR
BEST BITS

Using humour, music and high kicks, Big Girl's Blouse tells the story of a girl who was born a boy and became a woman. Supported by the Wellcome Collection, as part of its Sexology Season, it's a very personal story, performed by Kate O'Donnell.

"Big Girl's Blouse was something my dad called me as a put-down for most of my childhood," says Kate. "So I wanted to reclaim who I was as a child: strong, creative and a bit fabulous. I nearly didn't call the show Big Girl's Blouse as I hated being called that. Now I'm thinking of having t-shirts made. I am very proud of reclaiming it."

What attracted her to theatre? "For some reason, being on stage felt safe," she says. "I must be the only person who was searching for a spotlight, not hiding from it. I love the challenge and excitement of a live performance." But performing must be nerve-wracking, particularly something so personal? "I worry if I don't get nervous," says Kate. "It's an important part of performing for me. I am mindful of nerves when creating a show and try and make the beginning physical to get rid of them. Before I go on stage, I keep saying the



WORDS CARRIE LYELL, PHOTOS LEE BAXTER, ROSHANA RUBIN MAYHEW, JULIA BAUER

first line over and over again, as once that's out I'm fine."

So what can we expect from this show? "It's a story about being different," Kate says. "About growing up in the 70s and then coming out in the 80s, through to living as a woman. All the time going back to the strength and bravery of that child who taught me how to cope with what life throws at you. People I worked with on the show have encouraged me to be honest... I find the more personal it is, the more powerful it is. If I didn't want to put something in the show then I stuck with it and found a way to get it in, and that material makes up some of my favourite parts of the piece."

Kate, who has been performing for most of her life, says the work about her experiences as a trans woman has been really well received, including a short cabaret show called *A Short History Of My Tits*, which she'll be performing at Duckie in February. She'll also be taking *Big Girl's Blouse* on the road later this year.

A quietly political show, she was inspired to tell her story after noticing increasing hate towards LGBT people. "I live my life as a woman and my trans identity more or less goes unnoticed," she says. "But last year, I was aware of the rise in worldwide homophobia and transphobia and thought, it's time to stand up and be queer! And do what I do best – make a song and dance about it." ☀

Wed 11 and Thu 12 Feb, 9pm. £10/6. Over 14s.

To keep up with Kate's work, check out facebook.com/katedonnellpresents.

KATE O'DONNELL ON TOUR

More opportunities to catch Kate in *Big Girl's Blouse*

Fri 8, Sat 9 and Sun 10 May, 6pm.

The Marlborough Theatre

4 Princes Street, Brighton BN2 1RD

01272 91 72 72 | brightonfringe.org

Presented by Pink Fringe, £9/£7.

Sun 14 June, 5pm.

Slung Low's HUB

67-71 Bath Road, Holbeck, Leeds LS11 9UA

boxoffice@slunglow.org | slunglow.org

Pay what you decide.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS



PERFORMANCE

EGGS COLLECTIVE: GET A ROUND

Exploring friendship and kindness against the backdrop of a night out, *Get A Round* is a smart and energetic show from Eggs Collective, a young female theatre and cabaret company developed through Contact. Catch it before a national tour later in the year.

Thu 5–Sat 7 Feb, 9.30pm. £13/7. Over 18s.



PERFORMANCE

AMY AND ROSANA CADE: SISTER

A critically acclaimed, frank examination of the bond between two sisters – one a sex worker, the other a lesbian activist. This powerful and joyous performance received rave reviews at last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and deservedly so.

Thu 5–Sat 7 Feb, 7.30pm. £13/7. Over 16s.



CLUBBING

WITCH*UNT

An unmissable female-focussed hip-hop, house and electro club night with a strong feminist aesthetic and concept-driven stage production.

Sat 7 Feb, 11pm–4am. £5.50 (£6 door). Over 18s.



DIVA DEBATE

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX BABY

Join us for a lively and arousing debate about lesbian and bisexual desire. DIVA editor Jane Czyzselska is joined by an expert panel including filmmaker Campbell X (pictured, far left), Dr Rachel Morris from Cosmopolitan and Kathy McGuirk (pictured, left) of the Lesbian and Gay Foundation.

Fri 6 Feb, 6pm. £6/5. Over 14s.



A photograph of actress Bethany Black. She is leaning her head against a textured, light-colored wooden wall. Her gaze is directed upwards and to the right. She has short, dark hair and is wearing a dark, zip-up jacket over a dark t-shirt. A single overhead light fixture is visible above her, casting a warm glow.

Leaning in: Bethany Black
stars in *Banana*

BETHANY BLACK PLAYS STRAIGHT

Lesbian trans comedian Bethany Black has broken ground as the first trans woman to play an ongoing character in a British TV series. Helen Brears, a straight trans woman, appears throughout Russell T Davies' new Channel 4 series, Cucumber, which premiered in January. She is also the protagonist of an entire episode that explores her life in more detail, in the E4 sister series, Banana.

DIVA: Did you feel the script and character were a good representation of your own experience?

BETHANY BLACK: When you tell a story like this, it's going to be representative of some, but not everybody's experiences.

The character of Helen is so completely opposite to me: she's very straight and girly and I'm a butch lesbian. But the relationship she has with her family is almost exactly the one I have with mine. Christine – who plays [Helen's] mum – her speech is the same as what my mum said to me, almost word for word. It made me cry every time. So much exactly correlates to my experience.

What was the working relationship like with Lewis Arnold, your director?
He is the most wonderful human being. When I got the job we spent two days sharing really personal details of our lives, so we had this shorthand and he could drag out the emotional performances.

There were a couple of funny moments on set – when I looked around my character's bathroom and said, "You should probably know that I wouldn't have six boxes of tampons". Because the way the story is written, the character is trans but it's not about that – it's just a side-issue to everything else that is going on. That's why I was so excited to take part in it.

You self-identify as a lesbian trans woman. Was this a gradual realisa-

tion, or was there a Eureka moment?

As a teenager, I got really confused because you never saw lesbian trans women anywhere, so I assumed I couldn't be trans if I still found women attractive.

And then it hit me like a bolt of lightning. I remember thinking, "I find women attractive, everybody agrees on that. And I don't fancy guys because they're not attractive and everybody knows that as well. I get on with some guys, I don't feel that physical buzz, but surely no women do?" And then suddenly I went, "Oh, actually no, straight women do! Ah! Alright, that's where I am".

Growing up a lesbian and trans is so difficult to get your head round. It throws people's idea of gender and sexuality into turmoil.

How did you, as a lesbian, feel about playing a straight trans woman?

My whole first day was spent kissing Graham Bryan, who plays Ross. I came home to my girlfriend and said: "That was really weird, I had to kiss a man. It was rubbish." And all my straight friends who saw the photographs said: "I don't know what you're complaining about!"

The character of Helen feels like me about 10 years ago. Something that society and the media had drummed into me, was that if someone's willing to be with you, despite the fact that you're trans, you should just accept it.

And to actually say, "No – I'm better on my own, I can be loved for who I am, not what I am", I think that's the moral of the whole story.

Your character Helen at one point says to an ex-boyfriend that she's tired of being someone's fetish. Is this an issue you've confronted in real life?

It was actually one of those lines I felt uncomfortable saying, initially. There's this idea that you don't really talk about it. At least, for somebody of my generation.

THE TRANS COMEDIAN DISCUSSES HER GROUND-BREAKING ROLE IN THE NEW QUEER TV SERIES, CUCUMBER AND BANANA INTERVIEW

CATHERINE MURRAY

But the more I got into the role I felt, "Yeah, this is absolutely what needs to be said".

I think it's out there. People regularly come up and ask about whether or not you can come, whether you can have sex. People do genuinely feel almost like they have ownership.

The only time you actually see trans people represented, it's either glamorous, or a story with no redemption, or pornography. So this is how people then assume they can behave.

Are you hopeful that appearing on TV will help to change attitudes in society?

That's one of the greatest things about this role. I know from growing up and not seeing anybody trans on TV (except on Jerry Springer) that this will help change the narrative.

When I first came out as trans in the late 90s, no one wanted to talk about it. I had lots of trans women tell me that because I passed (which I hate), I should never let anybody know. I tried that for about six months and it was the most awful experience of my life, going from one closet to another.

When this goes out on TV, there will be people who, for the first time, get to see somebody trans playing somebody they can identify with. And they can see that it's not all doom and gloom and you're going to have to live in a tent and eat spiders.

The reason people aren't as homophobic any more, is that most people know somebody who's gay. That's the big key to turning this around, and stopping the level of harassment that happens to trans people on the streets. ☺

"Growing up a lesbian and trans is so hard to get your head round"

Cucumber (Channel 4) and Banana (E4) begin on 22 January.
What did Sue Perkins say about Banana? Find out on divamag.co.uk.

OLAGIRLS

THE LESBIAN MEDITERRANEAN GETAWAY

Calpe - Alicante - Spain
5-7 JUNE 2015
www.olagirls.com

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In 2015, choose an all-inclusive lesbian sunshine break with OlaGirls! Fun, sun & beaches are top of our list, together with delicious cuisine & adventure. Meet lesbians from all over Europe, kick back and relax!

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ESSENTIAL ORCHESTRAL POP
**JOHN GRANT WITH
 BBC PHILHARMONIC
 ORCHESTRA**

Live In Concert (Bella Union)

Recorded in late 2014, this wonderful album captures queer singer-songwriter John Grant live with the BBC's 60-piece orchestra. Grant's melancholy vocals and playful lyrics are underscored by flourishing brass and flute, emotive, towering strings and magnificent percussion. Breathtaking.

CHAPELIER FOU

Deltas (Ici d'Ailleurs)

A French composer, Chapelier Fou specialises in beautiful soundtracks and solo albums that fall somewhere between Yann Tiersen and Four Tet. His latest album is a gorgeous fusion of ambient electronica, synth-pop and modern classical. Some songs are driven by quietly euphoric beats, loops and melodies whilst others feature deep rhythms interlocked with swelling strings, acoustic guitar and tone-piano. Sublime.

DOWNLOAD THIS

HOST CULTURE

Ghost Culture (Phantasy)

Essential listening for electro fans, Ghost Culture's debut is a brilliant fusion of synth-pop, deep dub and machine-funk.

IF YOU LIKE DISCO
CERRONE

*The Best of Cerrone Productions
 (Because Music)*

One of the godfathers of disco, Cerrone has been producing dancefloor bombs with epic strings, lush grooves and orgasmic vocals since the 70s. This ace double CD features everything from seriously funky songs like Phonic and Midnight Lady to killer singles Supernature, Cerrone's Paradise and Love In C Minor.



NADINE SHAH
Stealing Cars

Newcastle's finest returns with this cool indie number with an-themic guitar and gorgeously restrained vocals.

MUSIC



X-rated: 18+

18+

Trust (Houndstooth)

A mysterious duo from LA, 18+ dabbled in visual art before releasing a trilogy of mix-tapes. Their long-awaited debut, Trust, morphs the sparse melodies of the XX and Deptford Goth with the leftfield hip-hop of Shabazz Palaces and THEE Satisfaction. Oixu, Dry and Nectar swing between chill-wave and very minimal electro whilst Crow, Midnight Lucy and Forgiven venture into digital R&B and dub. In keeping with their name, 18+ explore sex, desire, gender and identity in their songs with Sis crooning intimate, X-rated lyrics over skittering beats, slow synths, crackling loops and dirgy effects.



NATALIE PRASS

Natalie Prass (Spacebomb)

Nashville's answer to Dusty Springfield, Natalie Prass composes beguiling torch-songs that ooze old-fashioned romance, love and longing. Recorded with Matthew E White and his Spacebomb collective, her promising debut is packed with graceful songs that fuse 50s swing, 60s soul and 70s funk with timeless vocals.



NOVELLER

Fantastic Planet (Fire)

A prolific guitarist and composer, Noveller creates dreamy soundscapes that experiment with texture, tone and melody. There are layers of minimal synths, strings and dark beats but the prominent sound on Fantastic Planet is her rich, meandering guitar. One minute droning, the next crescendoing, it's mysterious and deeply hypnotic.



LITTLE MAY
Dust

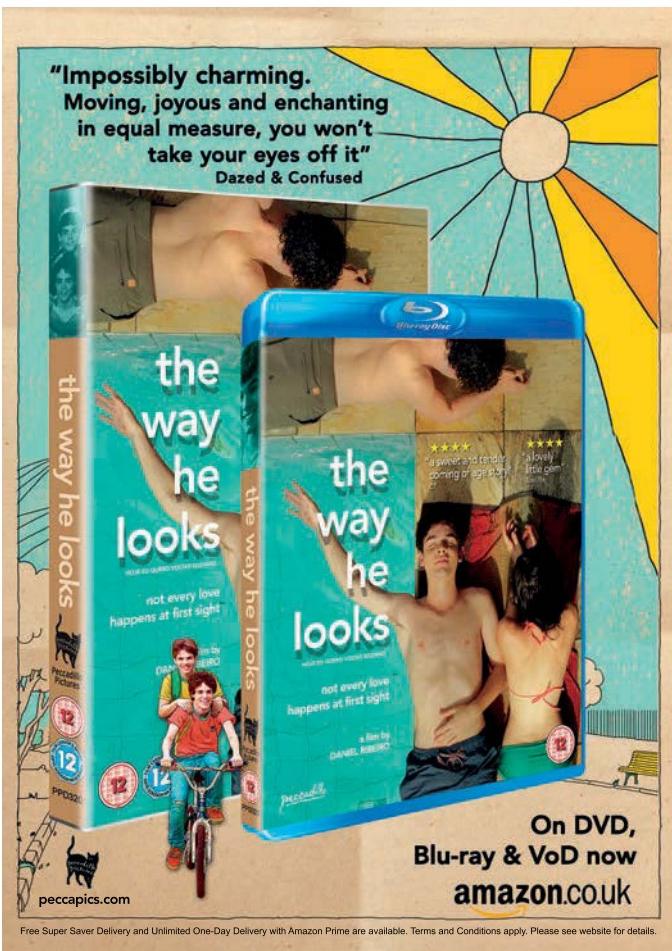
Sydney girl-group Little May fuse spectral pop with campfire folk on their lovely debut.



SEA CHANGE
Above

Oslo artist Sea Change layers field recordings with sizzling synth-pop on her deliciously icy single.

3 BEST TRACKS



THE ALBERT KENNEDY TRUST 25 ANNIVERSARY

Creating safe homes for young LGBT people

£10 could take an LGBT young person off the streets for one night

text
“ALBT25 £10”
to 70070

and show you care



THAT'S THE SPOT

AN EXCLUSIVE SERVICE FOR WOMEN

That's The Spot is based in Cardiff, Wales. Founded and owned by Rhiannon, a gay woman, you can book her in for an individual or a couples consultation or get together with your friends for a soirée where you will get a chance to look at the toys in 'real life' before deciding on what to buy.

That's The Spot's ultimate aim is to educate and empower women in their sex toy buying experience.

Scan the QR code with a smartphone to see more



A MOST VIOLENT YEAR

Dir JC Chandor



I feared I was in for one of those period mob movies populated by identikit men in 70s moustaches mumbling about "hits", but instead I got a tight film about businessman Abel Morales (Oscar Isaac) trying to live up to his name while protecting his livelihood and family during 1981: the most dangerous year in NYC history. Beautifully menacing cinematography and score, along with a clever script that doesn't over-explain, make this a thriller highlight. Jessica Chastain is on fine form as Morales' mobster wife, while newcomer Annie Funke delights as the efficient head of a rival business.

In cinemas 23 January

DANCING IN JAFFA

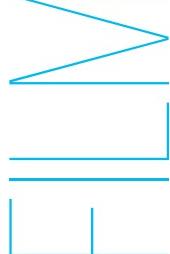
Dir Hilla Medalia



Ballroom dancer Pierre Dulaine returns to his native Jaffa to start his innovative Dancing Classrooms programme in this unusual and enjoyable documentary. Believing that he can ease Palestinian/Israeli tensions by encouraging 10-year-olds to merengue and cha-cha-cha across cultural and religious divides, Pierre sashays into schools and tries to persuade pre-teens to dance politely with each other. Can they overcome their natural disinclination to touch a) members of the opposite sex, b) members of other religions? The personal lives of some of the children and their families reveal just how deep tensions run.

In cinemas 13 February

& ONLINE



The Duke of Burgundy:
what filmmaking should be

THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY

Dir Peter Strickland

While I'm sad to say this is my final month as film editor for DIVA, I'm delighted to be able to go out on a high with this wondrous film starring the brilliant Sidse Babett Knudsen and Chiara D'Anna as lesbian lovers caught in a surprisingly tender circle of BDSM, control and longing. Set against a backdrop of butterfly research in a beautifully stylised 1960s parallel universe populated entirely by women, Strickland never succumbs to the lure of style-over-substance, but keeps the focus on his characters. The result is an original, moving, sweet, sorrowful yet frequently funny portrait of a relationship where the balance of control is more complex than it appears. This is what filmmaking should be. Thank you.

In cinemas 6 February

DVD
SERENA

Susanne Bier's movie takes itself waaaay seriously, but the female-focus of the J-Law melodrama at least makes a change from po-faced There-Will-Be-Blood male fests. But why does no one in Ye Olden Days rural America ever have a sense of humour?

On sale 23 Feb (digital download from 16 Feb), rrp £17.99

LESBIAN MOVIE ROYALTY
NICOLE CONN

The founding mother of lesbian film is fundraising for her new feature, Nesting Doll. Please help her add to the oeuvre that includes Claire of the Moon, Elena Undone, A Perfect Ending and Little Man. Just £7 will make a difference. If we want more onscreen representation we gotta fund it!

nicoleconn.com/about-nicole

HEP HEP HURRAH
KATHARINE HEPBURN

The gorgeously witty Hollywood legend apparently swung both ways, with one recent book claiming Kate had over 150 lesbian affairs. (I always thought she looked great in slacks.) Catch all her hits, including the rroarosome Bringing Up Baby, at the BFI.

BFI Katharine Hepburn season, 1 Feb–19 March, bfi.org

COMMUNITY
GENDER PLAYFUL

Gender Playful is a community project that celebrates diversity in gender presentation and body types. This lovely blog presents fashion solutions for those of us who skew gender expectations.

genderplayful.com

BLOG
THE LESBARY

- The Lesbary is on a quest to read every lez word written,
- and this comprehensive blog is perfect for all you bookworms who like your literature lesbian.
- lesbary.com
-
-
-
-

VIDEO
ALEX BERTIE

- A graphic designer from Dorset, Alex has racked up over 65,000 subscribers to his channel where he makes entertaining and educational vlogs about his experiences as a young trans man.
- youtube.com/user/thererealjazzbertie
-
-
-
-

ONLINE

**MEL & SUE**

We couldn't be more chuffed that Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins are back with their first daily chat show in over 16 years. The pair are warm, funny and uplifting, and although we loved them on *Bake Off*, there's something about seeing them live that's all the more enjoyable. Mel said: "We love live because of the roughness round the edges, the excitement, the madness and stuff going off on all sorts of weird tangents." If you've not tuned in yet, you've missed great celebrity guests like Jennifer Saunders and Dermot O'Leary – but never fear, there are many more to come. Thing is, we're already worrying about what we'll do when it's over. How long 'til the next series of *Bake Off*? See interview p24 | ITV, weekdays, 4pm

**WHAT WE'RE WATCHING
PRETTY LITTLE LIARS**

Pretty Little Liars may have vanished from TV screens, but the first five seasons are now available on Netflix to watch at your leisure. Based on the novels by Sara Shepard, it follows the lives of Aria, Hanna, Emily and Spencer, four girls whose clique falls apart following the disappearance of their leader, Alison. But the girls are reunited when they begin receiving messages from the mysterious A, hell-bent on revealing that there's more to their pretty little lives than it seems. At first watch, the US teen drama might seem like vapid fluff, but bear with it because it does get better. Series 1-5 are available on Netflix now.

**NEW SERIES ALERT!
HOUSE OF CARDS**

We're so excited about the third season of this fascinating, fast-paced political thriller starring Kevin Spacey. A Netflix Original, the first two seasons were incredibly popular, picking up huge audiences and an Emmy along the way, and we're sure it's going to be just as popular when the new series drops on 27 February. Like *Orange Is The New Black*, all episodes are released at once, but do try to pace yourself. At least a little bit, anyway, because rumour has it this might be the last season. Need a refresher? Seasons 1 and 2 are available on Netflix now.

Netflix, 27 Feb

**COP DRAMA****THE MYSTERIES OF LAURA**

Starting on 5USA this month, *The Mysteries of Laura* is a new cop drama starring Debra Messing (*Will and Grace*), Josh Lucas (*A Beautiful Mind*) and *The L Word's* Janina Gavankar (*pictured*) as Laura's rival Meredith, a detective who does things strictly by the book.

**CRIME DRAMA****TRUE DETECTIVE**

Out lesbian actress Emily Rios (*Breaking Bad*) has been cast in series two of the addictive and gripping *True Detective*. Another reason to add it to your binge list, if you haven't already.

SUPER ORIGINS**GOTHAM**

Part two of the Batman origin story *Gotham* kicks off on Channel 5 this month. The first part had over two million of us hooked as badass lesbian detective Renee Montoya (*Victoria Cartagena* (*pictured*), *The Good Wife*) tried to win back her ex, Detective James Gordon's fiancee Barbara Kean.

**COMEDY****NURSE JACKIE**

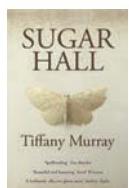
Series six of the Golden Globe-nominated *Nurse Jackie* is confirmed for a return to Sky Atlantic this month. Edie Falco reprises her role as a drug-addicted nurse in one of our favourite dark comedies.



YA FICTION
UNSPEAKABLE
Abbie Rushton

Fifteen-year-old Megan hasn't spoken in months, but when she strikes up a friendship with effervescent new classmate Jasmine it seems like things might just get better. Megan is keeping some scary secrets, however, and their blossoming relationship is soon threatened in this fast-paced thriller.

Atom Press, £6.99



FICTION
SUGAR HALL
Tiffany Murray

Easter, 1955. Young Dieter Sugar sees a naked boy in a shining collar in the shed at mouldy, moth-ridden Sugar Hall. His mother, Lilia, doesn't believe him, but it becomes quickly apparent that the past has quite literally come back to haunt their family in this well told, very chilly ghost story.

Seren Books, £8.99 eBook £5.99



ANTHROPOLOGY
CHERRY GROVE, FIRE ISLAND
Esther Newton

A new edition of this 1993 title documenting the sexual and political past of the famous gay and lesbian resort community. Covering parties, drag, wealth, race, police harassment and prejudice, a section titled The Lesbian Minority 1936–1980 records women's experiences.

Duke University Press, £15.99

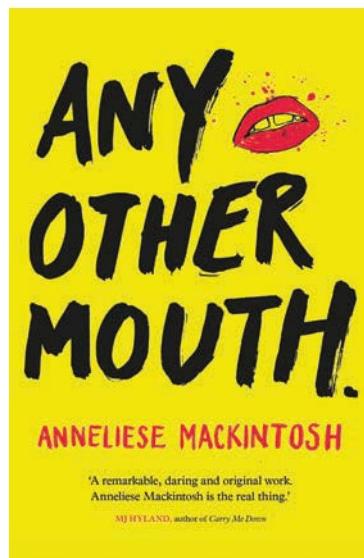


ART/POLITICS
PHOTOGRAPHY AS ACTIVISM
Michelle Bogre

"Don't mourn – photograph." Part call to action, part academic analysis, Bogre's study examines activist photography's political intent and effect on social reform. This informative, at times shocking collection of essays, interviews and images includes a useful resource list for budding photographers with a cause.

Focal Press, £20.99

BOOKS



SHORT FICTION
ANY OTHER MOUTH
Anneliese Mackintosh

Bereavement, anger, sex, mental illness and the difficult matter of what it means to be an adult are recurrent themes in this frank collection of semi-autobiographical short stories, a number of which are so closely interconnected they could easily be read as parts of a fragmented novel. These are stories which find their strength in directness and blunt honesty as Mackintosh's young protagonists grapple with the difficulties of day-to-day life, with taking on a PhD and not knowing

why, with drifting about, with hatred and self-harm, with messy sexual relationships and spilled drinks and piss and suppressing farts; here, the raw, unpretty side of life is right at the surface, confronting the reader with the grubby truth of life head-on. Fans of Lena Durham and of Zoe Pilger's Eat My Heart Out and Charlotte Roche's Wetlands are likely to enjoy this winner of one of last year's coveted LGBT literature honours, the Green Carnation Prize.

Freight Books, £8.99



SHORT FICTION
L IS FOR...
Ed Jayne Fereday

Including a laugh-out-loud blind date story from Kiki Archer, a tale of caravan park pain from Clare Lydon and VG Lee's hilarious portrait of a friendship, Alpaca Moonlight, this anthology showcases some of the best UK "lesfic" around, with proceeds going to the very worthy R U Coming Out charity.

Smashwords, eBook £3.94, pb £9.99

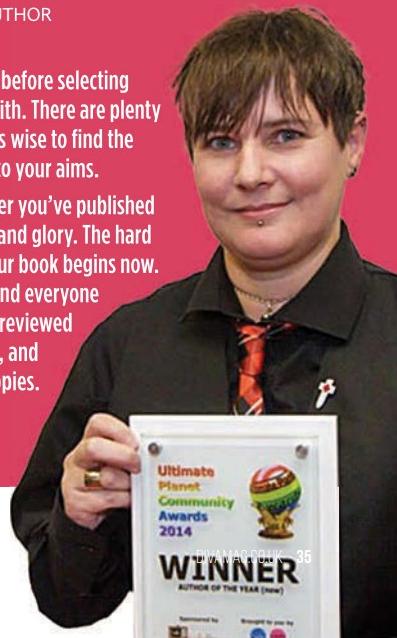
FIVE THINGS I WISH I'D KNOWN ABOUT SELF-PUBLISHING

A SELF-PUBLISHED AUTHOR HERSELF AND ULTIMATE PLANET AWARDS (NEW) AUTHOR OF THE YEAR 2014, KAREN CAMPBELL SHARES HER ADVICE ON GOING IT ALONE

- 1 You need readers. There is no point publishing a book if no one is going to buy it. So, write. Lots. Start a blog, post free stories, interact.
- 2 People care about spelling and grammatical errors. No one wants to read a book littered with mistakes. Have your book professionally edited. It may cost but it's definitely worth it.
- 3 Think about what you want your cover to say about your book. Covers need to catch the eyes of potential readers, so make sure it's appropriate to your market

Karen Campbell's supernatural crime novel *The Knowing* is available now at amazon.co.uk, £8.99 and ebook £3.02

- 4 Do your research before selecting who to publish with. There are plenty of options and it's wise to find the one most suited to your aims.
- 5 Don't sit back after you've published expecting riches and glory. The hard task of selling your book begins now. Contact anyone and everyone to get your book reviewed and talked about, and give away free copies.



Megan Abbott's intelligent and disturbing crime fiction puts female friendship in the frame, from the 1930s to the present day.

DIVA: Your early novels, the noirs, are each set in distinctly different eras. What drew you to those particular times?

MEGAN ABBOTT: The first book, *Die A Little*, is in the 50s. I was interested in having a character who was a school teacher in the 50s because it was such an era of contrasts between this heavy propriety and all-American family, contrasted with this underbelly that was also present, this feeling of transgression and a time when the Mob was taking over gambling. *Queenpin* is set almost in no time, to me it's set in noir world, it's not a particular time. And then *Bury Me Deep* is set in the early 30s. I was fascinated by how marginal existence for a young woman in the Depression [might be], her dwindling circumstances and where that might leave her, the relationships between women both being a potential rescue and salvation but also problematic because everyone's fighting for survival, too.

What made you decide to come up-to-date in your last three novels?

I felt there was a little bit of a creative rut and then I became interested in the idea of pursuing the same noir themes in contemporary times. I totally understand why to anybody else they would look like this huge turn but to me they're the same concerns and fascinations. They are really about women on the edge, transgressive females. To me they are all connected – it's just the setting that's changed.

In all your books the relationships between the female characters are the motor that drives the story.

What is it about female friendships that makes them such fertile creative ground for you?

I think they're still so under-explored. To me, female friendships are very

CRIME WRITER
MEGAN
ABBOTT
EXPLORES
THE DARK
BUSINESS
OF BEING A
WOMAN
INTERVIEW
LOUISE CAROLIN

"What all of us really want when we read is to get into the muck of life"



Femme fatale

complicated and filled with nuance, because of the way that women are socialised to deal with conflict differently. We read so much about how men interact with other men, and how men and women interact, but so little about women and the ways in which they're forced to communicate in a different fashion. Girl friendships can be like grand romantic affairs and often the most significant of one's life, and that feels really underexplored and really significant to most women I know.

I've heard it described as misogynist to portray women's relationships as inherently unreliable or untrustworthy. How would you answer that charge if it was levelled at you?

Boy, I would say that to me misogynist, destructive views of gender are to imply that women are really simple and they just want to go shopping with their female friends. It really flattens women and their friendships out and takes all the richness of them away. I think what all of us really want when we read a book is to get into the muck of life.

Not all your stories have lesbian or bisexual narratives but several do and it's evidently a really compelling dynamic for you. Do you identify as gay or bi yourself?

I don't; I am basically straight but I am a believer in the continuum of sexuality and that's something I like to explore in my books. *Bury Me Deep* [features] what is clearly a gay relationship, although the characters wouldn't necessarily have called it such. If you look at their behaviour, certainly in my novel *Dare Me*, it really is a love affair between those two girls and it's gone wrong. They wouldn't identify it as such and people have read *Dare Me* and missed it completely, even though they make out! To me, desire is so fluid, and noir is a great way to explore that because desire underlies so much that goes on.

Thinking about the idea of the femme fatale, it's interesting to try

to identify who she might be in each of your books. Often the character with her finger on the destruct button looks like somebody else's victim to me. What does the archetype of the femme fatale mean to you?

I've always subscribed to that notion that the femme fatale in noir is not an actual person, it's this projection of male anxiety about the power of women, but that's also their power, so that they have this immense hold over the other characters and the reader. But I always wanted to go behind the femme fatale and animate her in some way, and to give her depth and blood. And then she really does look different, she looks like a survivor, looks like someone who has found herself too much at the mercy of foolish men and sometimes foolish women. And the funny thing is that she often then doesn't appear as a femme fatale; she looks different if you're looking at her from the inside. I think the closest I've come to a classic femme fatale is *Queenpin*, but that's a woman looking at another woman as a femme fatale, which I think makes it feel different too.

Dare Me is convincingly set in the intensely competitive world of high school cheerleaders. Where do you get your inside track on teenage girls?

Like many women, I remember that time in my life more intensely than any other. It's the time that the weight of culture comes crashing in and you're trying to forge yourself. So I certainly have my own memories of complicated friendships and triangles; all of that is at fever pitch at that age. But being a teenager is really different now because of technology, it amplifies everything because of how connected they are at all times. I did a lot of online eavesdropping among cheerleader groups in forums and chat rooms, mostly about how they felt about cheerleading as a sport, their competitiveness with each other, their one-upmanship, their hard military rigour, but also the notion of never not being on display now that

you're hooked in 24 hours a day with each other, so you're always fashioning a self because you're never really alone when you're constantly texting and on social media. You know, some teenagers sleep with their phone in their bed. So it was sort of folding that into my own memories.

You come back to teenage girls with your most recent book, *The Fever*, based on true-life events. Can you tell me more about that?

Eighteen girls at this small-town high school in upstate New York developed these mysterious motor and vocal tics and when the story broke in the States I saw them on TV. At the time they had no diagnosis, or no diagnosis they were happy with, and they were so panicky. There was this weird moment when [an interviewer] asked one of the girls if she was angry that she didn't know what was happening to her and the girl, who was a cheerleader, said, "Yes, I'm angry", but as she said it she was smiling. It was both creepy – because the whole thing was creepy – but also so telling to me. It was an automatic thing to smile when an adult asks you a question, when you're on TV ... You're not ever supposed to be angry if you're a teenage girl and a cheerleader. So even saying it, "I'm angry", she had to mitigate it by smiling. That fascinated me. It seemed like a great way to explore the contradictions and complexities of being a teenage girl in a world that has a very limited view of how important you should be.

Are you working on your next book?

I am and it's about the mother of a gymnastics prodigy. I'm really interested in those families where everything is invested in the extraordinariness of one child and the family operates around that and everyone's supporting that. It's a very psychologically odd dynamic. And something bad happens, obviously! ☺

The Fever is published by Picador.

"I don't think 70 is old now"



Y ou're welcome to smoke," Maggi Hambling instructs rather than offers. As we climb the stairs of her south London house, she's already coughing and carrying not one but two packets of cigarettes from a large multipack on the kitchen table. "Oh, thank you, but I don't," I reply. "Shame," she says, as we reach her studio, which she describes as "the world's largest ash tray".

ANNA MCNAY VISITS THE ARTIST MAGGI HAMBLING AT HER SOUTH LONDON STUDIO

Maggi, who turns 70 later this year, closed 2014 with a pair of exhibitions showing her *Walls of Water* series – paintings in the National Gallery and monotypes at Marlborough Fine Art. Her sea paintings began back in 2002 – 30 November to be precise – when she witnessed a huge storm with extraordinarily high waves crashing into the sea wall at Southwold. The paintings are large and powerful, expressions of her enduring love affair with oil paint, which is "very sexy stuff, right?" I overheard some visitors to the gallery talking about their masculinity. "Well,

as Picasso said," Maggi snorts, "we're all partly male and partly female and you have to bring the whole thing together to make a work of art. However long a painting takes to make, you have to bring the whole thing together into one moment. I try to make that moment as intense as falling in love."

But are her sea paintings about love or sex, I wonder. "Well, the incoming wave, coming in gradually and then crashing down, is an orgasmic moment. So sex is there. And death, of course. Life and death together, I hope, however pretentious that sounds. I



think great art always has this ability of bringing life and death together."

Her forthcoming exhibition, Maggi Hambling: War Requiem And Aftermath, certainly includes works on this theme. "The point being," Maggi explains, "war seems always to have been and it doesn't seem to stop. And we all sit there and watch the news on television and it just goes past us: people being killed, houses being burnt and all the rest of it. I still have this belief that oil paint can do something that photography can't."

In addition to paintings and a film

PHOTO JENS MARROTT

of her installation at SNAP (Art At The Aldeburgh Festival, summer 2013), the exhibition will include a number of Aftermath sculptures, originating from logs. "I find these bits of wood everywhere, and if they suggest something, I encourage them to become that thing. They're sort of inspired by worn-away graves, where you can see faces, and gargoyles and relics."

Not long ago, Maggi spoke of approaching her early middle age. "I still say that," she nods. "I gave up arithmetic at 11 – I couldn't understand it and I still can't. But even I could see that 50 was half of 100 so that made sense and I felt I was halfway there. And then 60, of course, you know you're in the second half, and that's when I bought a Bentley. Sixty was more of a problem than 50. But I don't think I feel anything in particular about turning 70. Things have changed so much. I don't think 70 is old now. Look at the things people do right up into their 90s. And I do actually feel younger; I feel I'm painting much more freely than I ever have, there's some unleashed thing, I'm much less inhibited."

Her lack of inhibition caused something of a stir last year, when she made racially insensitive remarks about the film 12 Years A Slave. Speaking at University Campus Suffolk in Ipswich, Maggi said that "slaves would be very handy" and she "wouldn't mind a few".

"Christ! Christmas!" she exclaims when reminded of this. "It was a joke! I hadn't even said black slaves – slaves are all colours, as we know. I mean, where's your sense of humour? All this effing political correctness! Somebody asked me the other day what it was about the spirit of Soho and I said, 'No political correctness!' People could get very drunk, smoke, do drugs and say what they thought. It was all very refreshing. Nowadays people are afraid of saying anything."

So does she not regret saying what she did? "I stand by the fact that it was taken completely out of context. I've stood up for minorities all my life. To suddenly be accused of racism, I couldn't believe it. It's not a very sophisticated reaction to my remark. I'm not going to let it stop me saying what I think. I'm not known for keeping quiet about things."

Indeed, even Maggi's car is outspoken: "She's called Marilyn. She's a big

gangsta car and I've had her pimped to within an inch of her life. I've added as much chrome as I could and she's three colours. Her number plate is H10 GAY. I spaced it HI 0 GAY. People saw it and laughed but I got followed back in Suffolk by policemen – can you imagine? – three times, about the number plate having the wrong spacing. Finally I got fed up. I mean, haven't they got better things to do than question the spacing on my registration?"

Maggi is not at all fond of the word "lesbian". "I much prefer the word 'dyke' but I gather that if you're not a dyke, it's quite rude to say that word – all this political correctness again." She's also not keen on "all of those letters, what are they? LGBT ... It sounds like a trade union or something. I don't know why we can't all just be queer together".

Asked which other out and proud lesbians she looks up to, Maggi laughs a long, raucous laugh and exclaims: "Oh, Gordon Bennett!" After a long pause she hesitantly suggests that "Carol Ann Duffy is a pretty great poet and one has wonderful nostalgic visions of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West and Gertrude Stein and Sappho, I suppose. But people whose whole thing in life is that they are queer, you know, I think that's quite boring. If a great actor happens to be queer, or a great artist happens to be queer, well, great, but there are plenty of straight actors and straight artists too, you know. Oscar Wilde is a huge source of inspiration for a lot of people, I think, but he doesn't happen to be a lesbian."

And it is following an Oscar Wilde quote that Maggi likes to live her artistic life: "When the critics are divided, the artist is at one with himself." Some people hate my work, some people love my work, some people are indifferent to it. Once I've made the thing and it's left the studio, it's got a life of its own. I can't go round mothering it everywhere. I'm always into the thrills and spills of the next bit of work by then anyway." ☀

"Great art always has this ability of bringing life and death together"

Maggi Hambling: War Requiem And Aftermath will be on show at the Cultural Institute at King's, Inigo Rooms, Somerset House East Wing, Strand WC2R 2LS, from 4 March–31 May. A book of the same title, by James Cahill, will be published by Unicorn Press to coincide with the exhibition, RRP £30.

"I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE JUST A PAIR OF EYES, WALKING THROUGH THE WORLD UNSEEN, ONLY TO BE ABLE TO SEE OTHERS"

ANNA MCNAY
INTRODUCES
THE WORK OF
THE GERMAN
ARTIST JEANNE
MAMMEN

Born in Berlin, brought up in the well-to-do Parisian suburb of Passy, and educated in art in Paris, Brussels and Rome, German painter and graphic artist Jeanne Mammen (1890-1976) returned to Berlin in her mid-20s, where she set up a small studio at Kurfürstendamm 29. She

lived and worked here for over 50 years, providing for herself by selling her illustrations to fashion and satirical magazines. She was never without her sketchbook and especially liked to draw women, whom she portrayed in a gentle and understanding way, poignantly

depicting them in their social background. ▶

For further information about Jeanne Mammen visit jeanne-mammen.de, or contact Cornelia Pastelak-Price at the Förderverein of the Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung eV: cornpaprice@gmx.net.

Fishing Goldfish, c1925.

Pencil and watercolour on paper.
Original whereabouts unknown.
Published in: Der Junggeselle, Heft 45, 7 Jg, November 1925
© VG Bild-Kunst Bonn and DACS, London 2014
Photo: Archive Förderverein der Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung eV, Berlin

Mammen drew the ideal female types of the 1920s: the vamp, the diva and the garçonne. Art deco-style figures with bobbed hair, pale make-up and small red mouths. She created narratives within her pictures. In Fishing Goldfish, the women are shown fishing for the men, who will afford them luxury and pleasure. The sly devil in the top left hand corner is seen waiting to catch his prey.





**She Represents
(Fasching Scene),
c1928.**

Pencil and watercolour
on paper, 42 x 30.4 cm.
*Private collection,
Berlin.*

© VG Bild-Kunst
Bonn and DACS,
London 2014.
Photographer: Mathias
Schormann, Berlin.

Mammen painted the expanding metropolis of Berlin in the "Golden Twenties", with its theatres, cabarets and a flourishing lesbian subculture of "ladies' clubs". The red in *She Represents* captures the heat and excitement of one such club, where the main couple act out the butch-femme dynamic, commonplace at homosocial events.



Jealousy,
c1930–1932.

Lithograph in black
and yellow, 56.2
x 40.32 cm.

Ackland Art Museum,
The University of
North Carolina,
Chapel Hill, USA
© VG Bild-Kunst
Bonn and DACS,
London 2014.

Photo: Archive
Förderverein der
Jeanne-Mammen-
Stiftung eV, Berlin.

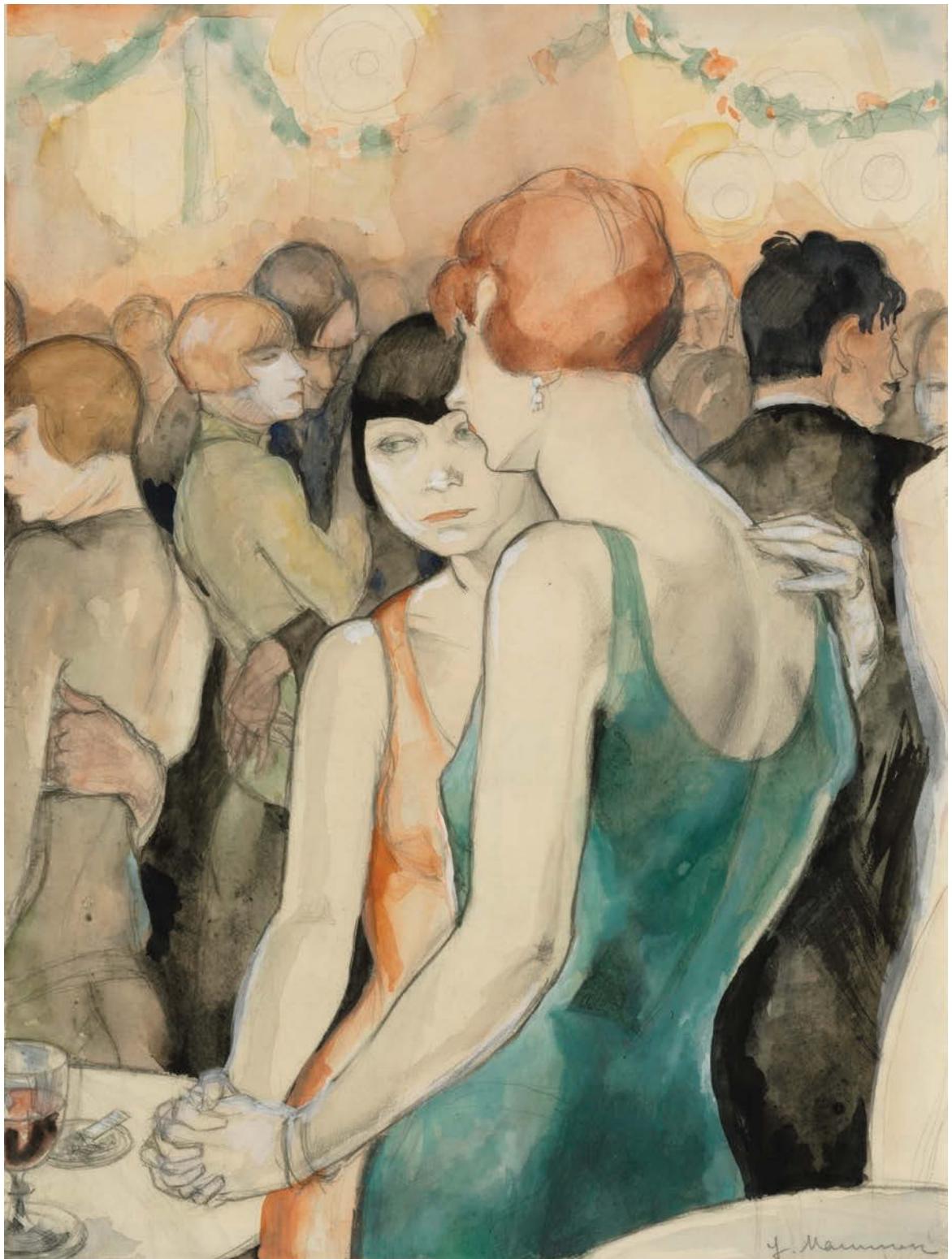
Jealousy belongs to a series of lithographs produced to illustrate a special edition of *Les Chansons De Bilitis* (The Songs Of Bilitis), a collection of erotic poetry in the manner of Sappho by French writer Pierre Louÿs. The Songs tell of the life of a courtesan in Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos. The emotions in this work are strong: the look of defiance, the lover's tight clasp, her kneeling and pleading.

Two Women Dancing,
c1928.

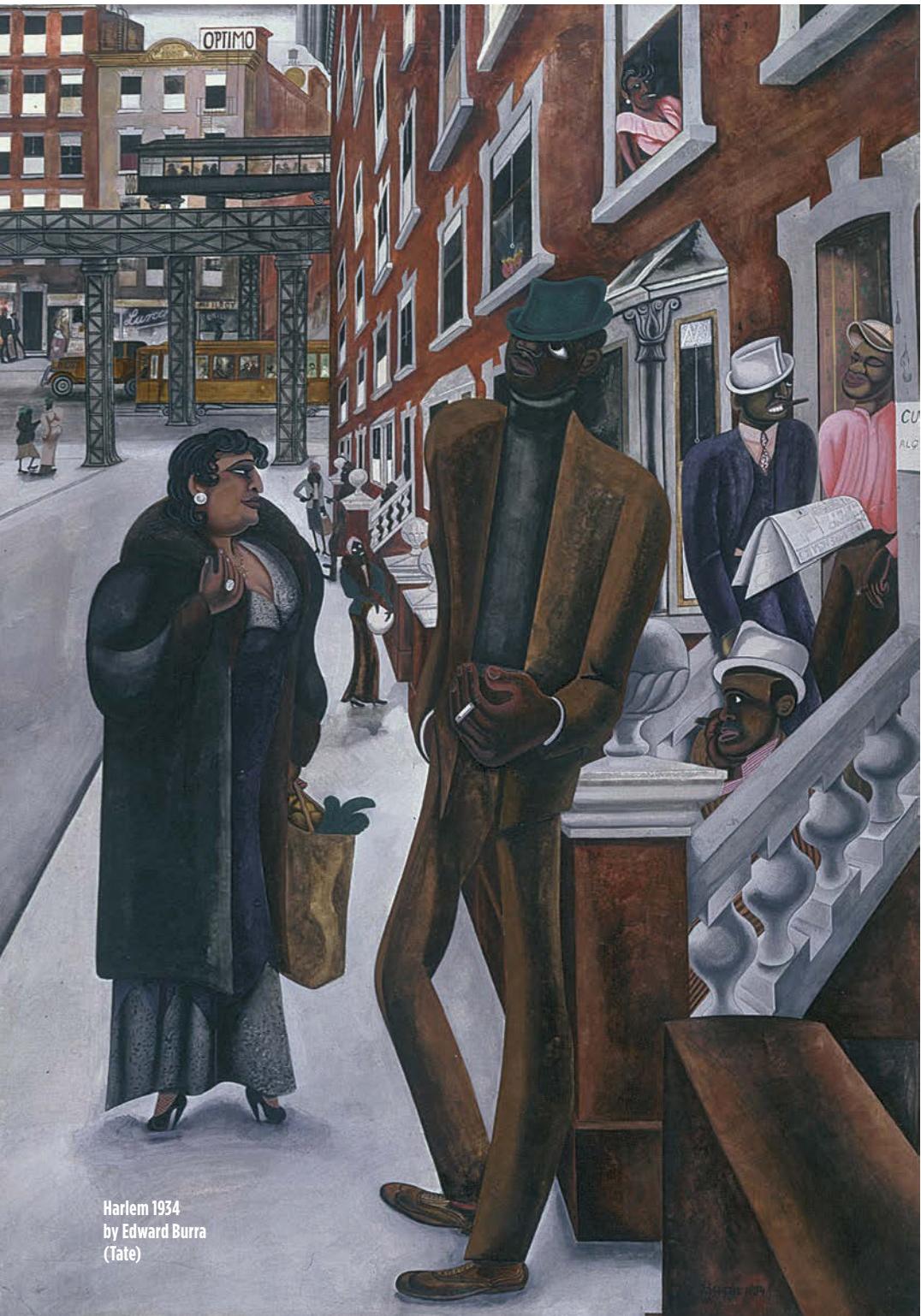
Watercolour and
graphite on wove
paper, 48 x 36 cm.
Private collection,
Berlin.

© VG Bild-Kunst
Bonn and DACS,
London 2014.
Photographer: Volker
H Schneider, Berlin.

Mammen's works
express sympathy
– sometimes even
empathy – with her
subjects, rather than
pity or disdain for
them – something
which sets her apart
from contemporary
German male artists
Otto Dix and George
Grosz. Scholar Laurel
Lampela argues that
such intimate and
tender paintings
of lesbian couples
could only have
been made from
experience, but her
only known intimate
relationship was with
artist Hans Uhlmann.



BACK TO BLACK



Harlem 1934
by Edward Burra
(Tate)

Although often overlooked, inter-war London was host to fascinating spaces of cultural and ethnic diversity, particularly in music and the arts and in the East End, where Africans and Asians lived and worked as part of the multi-ethnic dock communities. Even less well known are the significant communities and individuals based in Bloomsbury, Fitzrovia and Soho where writers, students, activists and performers of African and Asian heritage lived and socialised.

Several black artists, writers and performers took part in the cosmopolitan groupings of London's artistic avant-garde, from the Bloomsbury Group and the "Bright Young People" to Chelsea-based artists. Though many formed important friendships and romantic and sexual relationships, black artists and performers were also exoticised and objectified, experiencing racism as well as celebrity within these circles.

Among the personal photographs and letters held at Tate Archives are records of some of the queer black figures within these spaces, who have often been marginalised or ignored in histories of the period. The archives of Edward Burra and Barbara Ker-Seymer hold a number of beautiful photographs of black actors and performers who worked in London during the 1920s and 1930s, including Jimmie Daniels and Edna Thomas. A selection of these images and documents are currently on display at Tate Britain as part of the spotlight display Spaces of Black Modernism.

In the early 1920s a friendship group formed amongst some Chelsea art-school students, which was to continue for several decades and was based partly on a shared love of jazz music, music halls and performance, as well as cinema, theatre and art; their friendships were also sustained through a mass of letter writing. The queer British artist Edward Burra arrived at Chelsea College of Art in 1921 at almost 16 years of age and became friends with fellow students Billy Chappell, Clover Pritchard and Barbara Ker-Seymer. This group has been documented in a biography of Burra by Jane Stevenson.

During the 1930s Ker-Seymer became an important and skilled modernist photographer, influenced by German expressionism. In the late

1920s she'd begun working as an assistant for the aristocratic photographer Olivia Wyndham. Soon afterwards they started seeing one another and Barbara moved into Olivia's Chelsea home at 19 King's Road. Here they socialised with upper-class lesbians such as the American heiress Ruth Baldwin and Dolly Wilde, Oscar Wilde's niece, along with others including Burra, who visited Ker-Seymer and Wyndham often. The couple lived close by Ruth Baldwin and her female partner Joe Carstairs, a wealthy motorboat racer. They also socialised with others in the "Bright Young People" group. In June 1930 author Evelyn Waugh recorded attending a Thames steam-boat party hosted by Olivia Wyndham and Ruth Baldwin, which he noted in his diary was attended by "masses of little lesbian tarts and joyboys".

During this period, Barbara was taking everyday snapshots of her circle of gay and lesbian friends, and pictured at different times in the 1920s and 1930s are black members of her social group, preserved either as loose photographs or within a series of personal scrapbooks. Among them is a small snap of a group of Barbara's friends (shown, right), where they sit and stand next to what appears to be a motorcar. Pictured in the photograph are Ruth Baldwin, probably Dolly Wilde and Barbara, along with two others including a woman of African heritage whose identity and biography we are currently trying to uncover.

By the late 1920s Barbara had become friends with the bisexual Grenadian cabaret entertainer Leslie Hutchinson and we have included one of her pocket book diaries from 1929 in our display, which includes an entry for a party given by Hutchinson. Black queer avant-garde figures based in Britain in the 1930s also appear in the Ker-Seymer archive. From the early 1930s Barbara became good friends with the African American gay entertainer and nightclub host Jimmie Daniels and his boyfriend Kenneth Macpherson, a Scottish modernist filmmaker and critic who earlier in 1930 had directed *Borderline*, a feature film starring Paul Robeson and Eslanda Robeson. Daniels was born in Texas in 1908 and after training and working as a secretary in New York, he secured work on Broadway before moving on to professional singing. He went on

GEMMA ROMAIN GOES INTO THE ARCHIVES TO DISCOVER THE QUEER BLACK ARTISTS AND PERFORMERS OF LONDON BETWEEN THE WARS

to tour all over Europe in the 1930s, including London from 1933 to 1934. Later in the 1930s Jimmie Daniels and Kenneth Macpherson moved to New York, where they socialised with individuals including Barbara's (by then) ex-girlfriend Olivia Wyndham and Olivia's girlfriend, African American Harlem Renaissance performer Edna Thomas. (Edna Thomas also appears in the Ker-Seymer photographic archive.) Edna was an actor who had lived in London for a time.

With this return to New York, Jimmie Daniels established himself as an influential entertainer and host of club nights, with sexually and racially diverse patrons. The photographs in the Tate Archive give us an insight into the personal, day-to-day relationship between Macpherson and Daniels, the holidays they took together, the friendship groups they were a part of, their love of music and performance, and Daniels' love of artistic expressionism in photography through the experimental poses he undertook for Barbara Ker-Seymer.

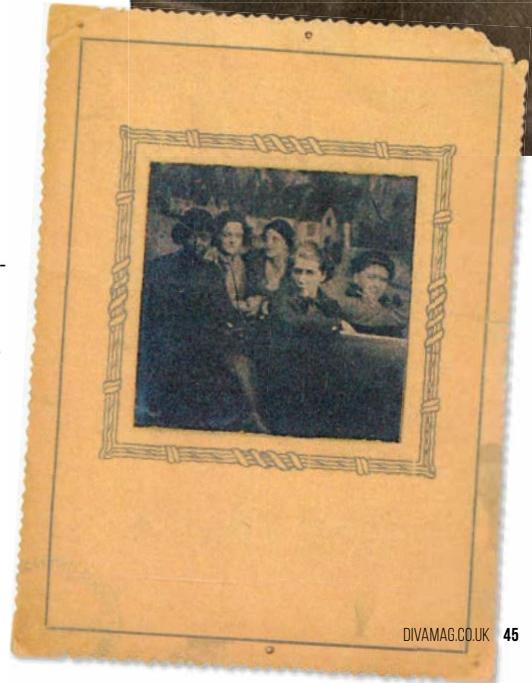
In Barbara's personal photo album from 1936 we also see that during the 1930s she was friends with singer, actress and performer Elisabeth Welch. Born in 1904, Elisabeth Welch was an American of African, Native American, Irish and Scottish heritage. Stephen Bourne's insightful biography of Welch records her experiences in 1930s London. During this time she performed in musicals and cabaret, and starred on radio, on television and in films alongside actors including Paul Robeson. She was good friends with Leslie Hutchinson, socialising with him, as she recalled, in "the marvellous late-night dives of Soho which, in those days, attracted all the stars and theatregoers". Welch is photographed by Ker-Seymer in a compelling series of solo portraits as well as informal snapshots with friends including Jimmie Daniels.

These stories do not reveal the full diversity of the queer black and white experience in the interwar period, particularly in regards to class. But the friendship networks revealed through the production and archiving of

these personal and professional images do highlight some of the fascinating interwar experiences relating to art, politics, sexuality and identity as well as the presence of black queer life in interwar London, and the complex histories and personal interactions within LGBTQ life in general during the period. Much more is to be uncovered and documented, and exploring archives such as these is an important way to achieve the uncovering of marginalised histories. 

Dr Gemma Romain is a historian based at the Equiano Centre, Department of Geography, University College London (@EQCentre). She is part of the team of women scholars who curated Spaces of Black Modernism, which is at Tate Britain until 4 October 2015.

Barbara Ker-Seymer's friend Elisabeth Welch, and (below), a photo found in Ker-Seymer's papers



Everyday snapshots of Barbara Ker-Seymer's circle include black members of her social group

A photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a white turtleneck and a dark fur-trimmed coat. She is holding a scroll with the word "Beauty" written on it. In the background, a large, ornate gold-colored statue of a lion's head is visible.

Bird la Bird: "Angry and
seduced at the same time"

Beauty



More information on p5 | divadigital.co.uk

WHAT LIES BENEATH

To participate in one of Bird la Bird's history tours is to be shown things that are easy to overlook but which, once seen, reveal uncomfortable secrets embedded within the everyday.

With gigs at the National Portrait Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum and in the City (London's financial district) under her belt, Bird demonstrates how class, gender, race, colonialism, disability and sexuality are present in the bricks and mortar of the establishment. Like picking up a stone to see what lies beneath, she exposes unsettling surprises like the renowned gallery built on the site of a workhouse, the ornate staircase built on the cheap by incarcerated women, the sexual subtext of a sacred object and the toxic working conditions of cleaners.

An Eastender originally from Liverpool, Bird has been developing her craft for about eight years and classifies her work "somewhere in the middle of performance art and comedy". With her tattoos, bleached hair, high femme sensibility and love of costume, Bird is unmistakeable as she guides people through buildings and streets. "When I go in and do something in a museum, the background becomes part of the overall storytelling," she says, "so it's an immersive experience. I never just get on stage in my own clothes, I don't work like that. It's about audio-visual sumptuousness really."

A Bird la Bird tour emerges from an engagement with history and sociology, she is a researcher as well

as a performer, and there is usually a lengthy development process with trusted collaborators. She explains: "I absolutely love history, I love personal histories, I love recent history, queer history, black history, women's history, working class history." But she has a particular take on this: "I'm not interested in the people who wrote books, made art, even though that's all very exciting. What about the people in that era who didn't have a chance to speak? People blab on about Anne Lister as being one of the most famous British historic lesbian figures, and yet she was really horrible to the staff on her estate and she made them all vote Tory. I think it's really important to talk about that as well as celebrating them."

Bird sees what she does as "encouraging people to understand that anger is a legitimate response in a museum". Of her own experience she says: "I noticed I became really angry when I got to just outside the door. You know sometimes when you're talking to someone and you get that kind of bristly energy because you know that there's something going on? I found that when I talked to the very nice staff in the museum, that I had that feeling. So what I did was that I went back and I decided that rather than seeing the anger as being illegitimate and shameful that actually I would walk into it as an artist." She is interested in exploring the complicated feelings that arise from institutional silence around exclusion and injustice in a context where there are rare and exquisite objects on display. Bird comments: "It is like holding the fact that I am angry, and holding

CHARLOTTE COOPER
MEETS
RESEARCHER,
PERFORMER
AND HISTORY
BUFF BIRD
LA BIRD

the fact that I am being seduced at the same time. You have these two contradictory things going on."

Alongside the anger, a fundamental of Bird's performance is that it has to be funny. She remarks: "The LOL part of what I do is so important because this isn't about taking the high moral ground, it's not about morality, it's about talking about the murky, visceral nature of history, and the impact that history continues to have on us." She continues: "For me humour is a very disarming thing, it's a bit like the moment that you sneeze, you might have this involuntary reaction. I think it's a wonderful space to operate in a political way."

Not surprisingly, audiences can't get enough of her. If you go on one of her tours, you'll see a crowd that swells as more people want to join in. What Bird does is make space for all kinds of folks who would not normally be found in a museum. It is a fantastic experience to see yourself reflected in the people around you, the atmosphere feels as though we're getting away with something sneaky and cool together. Bird reflects: "What I like about bringing people together and making them laugh, is that all of a sudden you get this group together belly-laughing, there's a collectivity in it and all of a sudden there's something about that moment when we laugh that actually brings people together just for those moments. I really like to do that." ☺

"It's about the murky, visceral nature of history, and the impact it has on us"

See Bird la Bird at the Wallace Collection, the Southbank and the Tate in February/March. For dates visit birdlabird.co.uk.

YOUNG LOVE AND MARRIAGE

hen I was growing up, same-sex marriage wasn't legal. Not that it bothered me too much. Back then, I

thought marriage was the most awful thing in the world. Growing up, most of the relationships around me – including my parents' – had broken down and I fancied myself as something of a feminist anyway so the whole notion seemed outdated and ridiculous. I came out when I was 16, and my mum (bless her) had a bit of a cry, mourning the wedding I would never have. I snorted that even if I was straight, I wouldn't get married anyway. And while growing up in a heterosexist world wasn't always easy, there was a part of me that felt quite privileged that by virtue of being attracted to women, I managed to dodge the kind of questions about marriage (and babies) that my straight friends were plagued with. It was just presumed that marriage was something I would never do. Something I could never do.

"Many lesbians, especially over a certain age, had no expectation that they would ever grow up to have a wedding. Gay women, especially, haven't spent any time dreaming of a storybook wedding in the way that some women might have – even reluctantly, under pressure from their parents or family," says June Thomas from Slate.com. But that all changed with the introduction of civil partnerships in 2005. Not only had we achieved legal recognition, but society was shifting and so were we. Our relationships moved out of the shadows and onto prime-time television. Suddenly, aunts desperate to buy a hat were asking probing questions about whether my partner and I wanted to get married, and – to my horror – I did.

I was 26 when my wife and I had our civil partnership in 2012. Many of my queer friends who had been vocal about their opposition to marriage were also shopping for rings or writing to their MP to demand full marriage equality. The voices of dissent – from inside and outside of our communities – fell almost silent and suddenly something that just a few years previously had been an impossible dream of the loony left was becoming a reality. Who

TEN YEARS SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS, AND ALMOST A YEAR SINCE THE FIRST SAME-SEX MARRIAGES IN ENGLAND AND WALES, HOW HAVE THEY CHANGED US?
WORDS CARRIE LYELL

could have predicted that just nine years after the introduction of civil partnerships, we'd see a Conservative prime minister champion legislation once considered radical?

2014 was a landmark year for same-sex marriage rights in the UK. Couples in England and Wales were able to marry in March, while the first Scottish ceremonies took place on Hogmanay – leaving only Northern Irish couples waiting for legislation. Many couples who were in a civil partnership took advantage of a process allowing them to convert to marriage, and married gay couples were fast becoming the new normal. Not so much revolutionary anymore, but very ordinary. And that change is reflected in how young queer people today think of marriage. What happened? Brian Heaphy, professor of sociology at the University of Manchester believes that generational dynamics are key to understanding the shift in how we view marriage has changed. In his paper, Civil Partnership And Ordinary Marriages, he says: "Until relatively recently, personal and broader cultural narratives of same-sex relationships were framed in terms of 'otherness'. Nowadays, such narratives are as – if not more – likely



to be framed in terms of 'ordinariness' with a focus on security, stability and respect."

A lot has changed since a 2001 study, four years before the introduction of civil partnerships, which found that while most LGBT people believed in equal marriage, only a small minority actually had any desire to be married themselves. The authors of *Same-Sex Intimacies: Families Of Choice And Other Life Experiments* noted: "Most non-heterosexuals... think that they should have the choice to get married, a small minority would like to get married, there are also those who feel that... their relationships are – or have the potential – to be radically different from heterosexual relationships. And thus, marriage is perceived to be a restrictive institution of the state, epitomising the worst aspects of heterosexuality with its prescribed gender roles and unequal power balance."

Today, the story is very different. A whopping 84% of respondents to a Survey Monkey poll by DIVA said that marriage was important, with 65% saying they were definitely considering marriage in the future. Only 10% were opposed to the idea. Those young people, Heaphy says, are the "narrators of the new realities of same-sex relationships". Instead of rejecting marriage or redefining it as our elders expressed a desire to do, it seems today's youth are keen to replicate conventional marriage practices – those of their parents, for example. Whereas some older lesbians spent many years emphasising the differences between their relationships and heterosexual marriages, today the dominant discourse seems to be emphasising the sameness. From the ceremony to the relationship itself, many young people are keen to fit in, not stand out.

Monika married her girlfriend when she was 23. "It wasn't an actual wedding. It was a civil partnership ceremony, but we really wanted eve-

rything to happen like it happens with 'proper' weddings," she said. "We both wore dresses, we had a massive ceremony, everything was just perfect." But two months after the wedding, the couple broke up. "It completely broke my heart and I didn't know what to do. I tried to find a reason why she made this decision but she wouldn't even speak to me." A year and a half later, Monika says she's "100% sure" that she would never get married again. "It's just not worth it," she says.

Sarah Perry, 24, says that while she and her fiancee are not a "particularly traditional" couple, they felt that marriage was "the next logical step". "We're no different from any heterosexual couple wanting to start their lives together," she said. "Marriage, to us, is about becoming one unit in every sense of the word. We will be amongst the first couples to be able to get married in this country, making history, and hopefully making it just a little bit easier for the next generation to come into a world where 'gay marriage' is known just as 'marriage'."

And while Catherine and Charlotte say marriage isn't right for everyone, it's right for them. The couple met when they were 12, and Catherine says, "As insane as it sounds, I knew I loved her then." The couple spent years seeing other people, but there was always a chemistry between them. "By the time I was 19, we were both in very unhappy relationships. We finally decided to bite the bullet, left our partners and started seeing each other. And honestly, I've never experienced happiness like it." Last June, they married. "Marriage isn't for everyone, but marrying the woman I loved all along has saved my life," she said.

How has this change happened in such a short space of time? Heaphy believes it might be because young people today have grown up without as much of a sense of otherness as their elders, and in contrast to previ-

ous generations, the majority of young queer people – at least in the UK – are not estranged from their families because of their sexuality. Family, in most cases, have been accepting – like that of Emily Holmes, 25, who's engaged to a girl she met at school. "We haven't set a date yet, but our families can't wait," she says. Friends are also supportive, whereas many older lesbians experienced hostility for "selling out" by entering into a heterosexual institution. "These cohorts have, to a greater or lesser degree, grown up with the cultural visibility of lesbian and gay identities and same-sex relationships, and will have legal recognition for their identities and relationships (in a variety of ways) for most of their adult lives," Heaphy says. "Many have grown up with a sense of the relative ordinariness of lesbian and gay identities and same-sex relationships or developed this fairly early on in their lives."

But not all young people have always wanted to get married. Twenty-two-year-old Anna Bailey-Bearfield married her 35-year-old wife despite the fact they were both "pretty anti-marriage" until they fell in love. "I proposed six months into our relationship," says Anna. "Meeting the love of my life has certainly converted me to understanding marriage and why people make a commitment to make it work through all the good times and the bad. Marriage, we have both realised, doesn't have to be a massively scary and daunting thing. Instead, it's what we make of it. Every day, we both run home so that we can dance, laugh, cuddle and have fun together. We have become more intimate, want each other to flourish and will never hold each other back. We're team-mates and that's great."

There's no denying it. Young queers have fallen in love with marriage, in all its traditional glory. But how long will the honeymoon period last? Only time will tell. ▶

"We're no different from any straight couple wanting to start their lives together"



THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT
YOU CAN GIVE AND RECEIVE.

SARAH RAI JAYNE HEARSE

LOVE IS STILL
LOVE, EVEN IF
THEY TURN
OUT NOT TO
BE THE GENDER
YOU THOUGHT!

NO IDENTITY

LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES. SOMETIMES
UR NEVER GOING TO KNOW WHAT U GET.
SOME ARE AWFUL AND NEVER WORK
OUT TO UR TASTE. BUT THEN THERE IS
ALWAYS THAT ONE SPECIAL ONE THAT
TAKES U TO NEW LEVELS AND BLOWS
UR MIND AWAY IN WAYS THAT U WILL
ALWAYS LOVE TO HAVE THE LASTING
TASTE OF XX NOW THAT'S LOVE.

JO SQUISH

LOVE IS
PAINFUL
HAYLEY

ALL
CONSUMING.
BEU BLACKHALL

PUTTING ANOTHER'S FEELINGS
BEFORE YOUR OPINION.

SARAH HELEN HARRIS

GIVING SOMEONE YOUR LAST COOKIE,
CARING FOR SOMEONE, ASKING ABOUT
THEIR DAY, KEEPING THEM WARM AT NIGHT,
LAUGHING WITH THEM, CRYING WITH THEM.

DANI CLANCEY

WHEN
I STILL
HAVE
FLUTTERS
WHEN I
SEE MY
GIRL-
FRIEND
AFTER
SEVEN
YEARS X.

TUPPENCE VON
TROTT

WAKING UP IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE NIGHT AND TURNING
OVER JUST SO YOU CAN KISS
HER SOFT, SLEEPING CHEEKS.

DAWN IVERSON

DIVA READERS
DEFINE LOVE
IN THEIR OWN
WORDS

GIVING SOMEONE THE POWER TO DESTROY
YOU... BUT KNOWING THEY WON'T.

ALEX MCCOY

DEVASTATINGLY HEARTBREAKING
YET HOPELESSLY INTOXICATING.

HAYLEY HARTWEG

WHAT IS LOVE?

Love is the sweetest thing. Or, at least, it can be. We asked DIVA readers to complete the sentence that starts with the words "Love is...". Some of you said love is "painful", while others told us love is "the most precious gift you can give and receive". Read on to find out the highs, the lows and the in-betweens of love.

STRENGTH HOPE AND BEING
THERE THROUGH NOT ONLY
THE GREAT TIMES BUT THE
GOD DAMN AWFUL TIMES AND
COMING OUT THE OTHER
SIDE STRONGER THAN EVER.

TANIA PORTER

LOVE IS... A SENSE OF BELONGING, A FEELING YOU'RE HOME, THRILLS AND EXCITEMENT AND FEELING COMPLETE.

TIZ JONES

LOVE IS BECKY LOIZIDES.
MY EVERYTHING X.

MICHELLE ROBINSON

BEING SINGLE AGAIN AFTER 23YRS
AND FINDING LOVE WITHIN MYSELF...

LAUREL PRUIM

LOVE IS... KNOWING THAT WHATEVER YOU'RE GOING THROUGH AT WHATEVER TIME, THERE'S SOMEONE THERE WHO IS THERE FOR YOU AND CAN HELP YOU GET THROUGH IT AND PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE.

GRACE MARSELLA

ALL YOU NEED. DA DA DA DA DAAAA

LUISA GOTTAUTO

THE FREEDOM TO FART WITHOUT BEING JUDGED.

HAINEE CATES

LIKE OXYGEN.

GEMMA POE FRARI

#LOVE IS #LIFE...

GRETTEL GRACE OGORDA

LOVE IS... THAT MOMENT WHEN YOUR FINGERS INTERLOCK, AND THE FEELING OF HOME, SWELLS FROM WITHIN YOU. WHEN A SIMPLE TOUCH TO YOUR BACK OR YOUR SHOULDER IGNITES A BURNING FUSE OF PASSION. THOSE FEW SECONDS WHEN YOU LOOK IN TO EACH OTHER'S EYES, COMPLETELY UNARMED, WANTING THEM TO SEE EVERY CREVICE OF YOU, EVEN THE DEEP DARK UGLY SHADOWS. TO UNWILLYINGLY TAKE EVERY PAIN THEY FEEL AND CARVE IT IN TO YOUR OWN. THE FEELING OF BEING COMPLETE, AS IF IN THAT MOMENT, AS YOU LOOK AT HER THE WORLD FINALLY CLICKS. THAT'S LOVE.

NIA JO THOMAS

FALLING IN LOVE JUST HAPPENS, BUT IN A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP LOVE IS A CHOICE YOU MAKE EVERY DAY.

ELINOR PREDOTA

FAMILY - HAPPINESS - LIFE

EMILY PEACOCK

ACCEPTANCE, BAD POINTS AS WELL.

KRIS SIMPSON

FRIENDSHIP, COMPANIONSHIP, TRUTH, DIFFICULT, EASY, FUN, HARD WORK, NEVER GIVING UP, LASTING. IT IS NAMASTE - THE SPIRIT OF EACH PERSON BOWING TO THE SPIRIT IN ONE ANOTHER. THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO LOVE THAN WHAT I'VE DESCRIBED BECAUSE LOVE IS EVER-CHANGING BUT STEADFAST.

RAE BEAR

LOVE IS...
DIFFERENT
FOR
EVERYBODY.

JEN NAPIER

THAT FEELING OF MUSHY BUTTERFLIES EACH TIME YOU LOOK IN HER EYES. THE IMMENSE PASSION FROM JUST A TOUCH FROM HER. LOVE IS THE HEARTBEAT OF MY FIANCÉE.

CATHERINE POTTS



FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

Last week, I spoke with two lovely young women who are eagerly planning their wedding. They asked me to officiate – always a particular joy. We spoke of their ceremony's details and of their excitement to enter into a legal marriage. And then they ventured into the heart-breaking territory of their disappointment in the church's response to LGBTQ people. Each of them grew up in the church – one as an Episcopalian and the other in the Baptist Church. Clearly, they love God and the church and want to be a part of a life-giving, loving version of Christian community.

They will celebrate their love on Valentine's Day – as many of us will. During this Love Month, we have much to celebrate: our marriages are celebrated in a growing number of countries around the world, including in the UK and in 35 US states.

But many who long for a spiritual source of love still struggle with the church and the Bible.

The good news is that the stories of our faith and the sometimes hidden characters we unearth in the pages of scriptures can be sources of hope and courage as we seek to live and love in a sometimes challenging world. Queer biblical scholars (and those of us who take a deeper look) have exhumed our people from the Bible's culturally entrenched stories. We can dig into the stories of both the Old and New Testaments and find queer characters who can encourage our spirits and invite us to give church and God another chance.

The New Testament story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is

one of those veiled references to gay or transgender people in the Bible. Speaking through this ancient tale, the character of the eunuch presses for integration of queer people in the life of the whole church.

Scriptural references to eunuchs include those who were some sort of sexual minority. The term eunuch could refer to those who don't quite fit the clear male/female binary, in addition to the familiar definition of castrated males.

Eunuchs were often exploited, used as slaves or for religious purposes. The eunuch, according to Jewish understanding, did not have the religious status that came with parenthood. The writers of the Hebrew Bible compare him to a dry tree. He would have no descendants.

The story goes like this: Philip, a disciple of Jesus, encountered a eunuch, a court official of the Ethiopian queen. When Philip saw him, the eunuch was reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Interestingly, the prophet Isaiah envisions that the realm of God's new covenant will overturn exclusion of eunuchs:

Let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

Thus says Yahweh: "To the eunuchs ... who hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house... a monument and a name better than sons and daughters..., a name which shall not be cut off."

Philip engaged the eunuch in conversation, told him the story of how God's love is known in Jesus, how Jesus loved and brought God to all, especially to those who were excluded. Then the eunuch, sexual outsider that he was, asked a courageous question.

REV GLENNA T SHEPHERD FINDS INSPIRATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR LGBT CHRISTIANS

"Here is water," he said. "What is to prevent me from being baptised?"

The eunuch seems to call to us from the pages of scripture: "Wait! We can be people whose sexuality defines us and one who is loved by God!"

They thought he had no descendants. But, in a profound spiritual way, God's LGBT people are the eunuch's descendants. We may ask the question, too: "What is to prevent us from being baptised, from having our gay, lesbian, trans bodies marked as God's own?"

Here is the table of communion. What is to keep us from being fed?

Here is the pulpit. What is to prevent us from telling our stories in the church?

Here is the blessing of marriage. What is to prevent us from receiving it?

We are the eunuch's descendants, queer people who love God and seek God's blessing. We don't have to confine parts of ourselves to the shadows. We can integrate and celebrate our passions and love God and another with holy fire and blessing.

Many LGBT people love the church: its essential messages of hope and love of God and neighbour, its sacraments and music, and its stories that teach us about lives of seeking and loving. The day is here when we must speak love's name – our love's name – in the church, in the presence and with the blessing of the God of Love. Ⓛ

Sometimes hidden characters in scripture can be sources of hope and courage

This article includes excerpts from a sermon in Glenna's new book, a collection of sermons entitled *Out On A Limb: Sermons Of Risk And Revolution* (Tollington Press). It's available at Gay's The Word bookshop and through amazon.co.uk.



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p5 | divadigital.co.uk

PHOTOS LEZLI+ROSE

MAKE-UP CLAIRE RAY @ CAROL HAYES

HAIR GENTIAN ZHOBE @ TONI&GUY WHITE CITY

ALLEGRA WEARS CAMOUFLAGE JACKET BY YSL

JACK WEARS LINEN T-SHIRT BY ACNE

Something's cooking...



JANE CZYZSELSKA GETS UP-CLOSE AND VERY PERSONAL WITH JACK MONROE AND ALLEGRA McEVEDY

Their story starts a year ago on Twitter. Jack had bought three goldfish for her then three-year-old son as a reward for his sterling bathroom behaviour and named them Nigel, Keith and Allegra – after the authors of the three cookery books that were sitting on a shelf in her kitchen. ▶



Posting a photo of the fish on Twitter worked like a piscean charm on chef Allegra McEvedy who responded with what the two now agree was a suitably crap joke – a question about whether she always named her food before she ate it; not clocking that the fish were pets, in case you were wondering. As she hit tweet, Allegra hoped she hadn't blown it with the woman to whom she is now engaged.

When I meet the celebrity cooks in their west London home just before Christmas, I'm welcomed into their spacious and busy open-plan front room and kitchen – from where the smell of slow-roast pork permeates the air – and I spot the three goldfish staring out from a bowl on a bookshelf, oblivious to their place in the couple's lives.

Watching the two of them together as we chat about love, sex, food, pets and kids, I think: how well suited they seem – Jack's febrile energy, Allegra's unaffected warmth – and I'm seduced by their vibrant physicality. As they recount their first few months together, Jack's speech is punctuated with lusty, conspiratorial cackles, Allegra's with rightbackatacha sass. Smitten.

Allegra confesses she's not a social media habitué, so what prompted her reply on Twitter? She was flattered, naturally, and she knew of Jack through her blog, her media appearances and a few friends who'd suggested the two should meet, but what seems to have clinched it was a quick look at Jack's Twitter profile picture. "I thought, 'Fuck me, she's gorgeous'. Four days later she moved in," Allegra announces, grinning.

"Er, I think it was about a week between our first contact and you giving me house-keys wasn't it?" Jack counters. "I had spent many hours, Jane, talking to Allegra on my mobile phone, walking up and down Southend seafront – the only place I could get reception – and then me and Jonny arrived at Allegra's front door for a playdate."

"Different activities for the kids and us, obviously," Allegra clarifies, chuckling.

By their fourth morning together, as Allegra was making breakfast, she asked Jack what her plans were. Jack said she thought she might pop back home to Southend – some 40-odd miles, mind – for some fresh clothes. "Do you have to?" Allegra remembers asking. And the rest is herstory.

Love is a moveable feast: as different with one person as it is with the next, so I ask how they knew they were meant for each other. "It's just unlike anything that I've known or experienced," Jack tells me. "It's as natural as breathing; it's hard to put it into words without sounding really corny but it just works and more than [that], it's exciting, it's constantly surprising but it's comforting and normal and level as well. It's everything it's supposed to be. It's what all the fuss is about." And for Allegra? "Instant spark, never felt like that before – and I've been around the block – smart, clever, impressive, her own person, very sexy, just the whole package." As I said, smitten.

Jack: "I quite often say to Allegra that 'I am the best me now' with her. With Allegra there's no filter. I can just be me and completely let [my] guard down. [When you can] let someone in and they don't run a mile, you know you've got a good thing."

Allegra: "Yep, you certainly do not filter. The full force of Jack Monroe is exactly what I signed up for and exactly what I want. I mean when we say that Jack came round with Jonny and she never went home, I mean that literally. She never. Went. Home."

Not that Jack was a "homeless waif" she says. "I may have a reputation for [that] but because of my book deal I'd been able to put a deposit down on a beautiful flat in Southend which was heart-breaking to lose but it was completely the right thing to do."

It's not lost on either of them that in the months leading up to their first date, several friends and colleagues had already suggested they meet up – advice which they'd both roundly ignored. Jack even remembers a drunken

JACK WEARS BLUE COTTON SHIRT FROM @ J CREW

evening discussing the vexed question of significant others with a friend a few years ago, taking a copy of Allegra's 2009 book *Economy Gastronomy* from her bookshelf and pointing to a grainy black and white photograph of the woman who is now her fiancee, exclaiming, "Why can't I just marry a woman like that for fuck's sake?" I emailed her a few months ago and reminded her and she thought it was quite hilarious," Jack recounts.

I'm curious to know how the two of them express their love, so I ask Allegra what she considers her acts of love?

"Well, obviously a lot of them are around food, and cooking and books: we both have a book that we write in for each other," she confides. "Fairly regularly we just pop them into each others work bags – it's a small notebook of love letters," Jack enthuses. That sounds adorably romantic, I offer. "It's fucking soppy," says Allegra, beaming.

Romantic gestures don't come easily to Jack. The first time she bought Allegra a bunch of flowers she dumped them unceremoniously on the kitchen table. Allegra said, "Oh they're nice," to which Jack responded, "Oh, um, yeah they're for you".

"Classic Jack," Allegra chips in. "She's got better at it now – she's gone the other way. We always do flowers for each other but I think mainly love is expressed by kindness. We have two four-year-olds and that can be pretty stressful. We have a fantastic life together but I think that the fact that we can support each other through the tough days is worth a roomful of flowers."

Multi-award-winning Jack Monroe describes herself on her website as cook, campaigner, Guardian columnist, mother and author. She's also a patron of HIV and AIDS food charity The Food Chain and an ambassador for both Oxfam and the Child Poverty Action Group. The scourge of Daily Mail journalists, Jack makes regular appearances on current affairs TV ▶

"With Allegra there's no filter"

A club for individuals,
bon-viveurs,
conversationalists,
aficionados,
life-experienced and
curious people.

Not everyone.





programmes, valiantly sounding off on anti-poverty issues.

Allegra's newest restaurant, Blackfoot in London's foodie haven Exmouth Market, is the latest in a long line of hugely successful gastronomic collaborations. Co-founder of award-winning fast food chain Leon, she has an MBE for promoting healthier eating and ethical food-sourcing.

As a patron of the Fairtrade Foundation, Compassion In World Farming and The Food Chain, she clearly shares Jack's commitment to living a conscientious life. The term "dynamic duo" seems an understatement.

Half Irish, half Greek, Jack Monroe is well versed in the Greek approach to love; that is, the four kinds of love. We've already touched on Eros but, says Jack, all four are present in the love she shares with Allegra. "There's also Agape: selfless love that is true and fair, Filial love, which is friendship and loyalty, and there's Storge, family love – that deep attachment and connection. [The four kinds of love] is one of the many things I talked about with Allegra early on."

Allegra's big on the different types of love too: with both parents now dead – her mother died when she was just 17, her father nearly 10 years ago – she remembers them daily to her daughter and she lives round the corner from her sister and her kids. She has a ton of close friends – "I'm a gregarious soul. Love is what it's all about" – and she describes the love she feels for her daughter as completely different to anything else. "It's in my veins, my whole body, my whole everything. It's very physical: the huge need to love and protect her."

There's one love we haven't talked about yet and that's fan love, the kind that a girl like Jack gets lots of, from legions of unknown admirers and fans of her recipes with whom she corresponds daily on Twitter to fellow celebrities, such as Nigella Lawson. "I didn't know what to do with myself the first time I got a Twitter message from Nigella," Jack remembers. "Now I'm relaxed about it but it did take a while."

Allegra is more circumspect about social media, especially so since she's got together with Jack. "The intrigue that comes with Jack partnering up with me, the intrigue that comes with me partnering up with Jack, suddenly we've got two kids, everyone wants to ▶

talk about that, so I feel it's actually made me want to close ranks a bit."

Perhaps because of some of the more sinister tweets she receives, it's no surprise that Jack has developed a new love for Instagram. She's even got a folder on her camera called Food That Looks Like Vaginas. "Once you start noticing, you'd be amazed," Jack tells me.

Allegra: "We'll be sitting there having dinner with a whole load of people and I'll hand her over a plate and she'll go, 'Yep, there it is!'"

Jack offers me her phone and shows me a photo of a poached trout, its pink flesh split open and surrounded by dark scaly skin. She flicks through others: "That's a truffle or a clam, that's beetroot and hummus, all the 'vaginas' are different-looking," Jack explains, helpfully. "And that's a Georges Braque one," Allegra pipes up, pointing to a photo that looks a bit like a still life of fruit and veg by the Fauvist French artist.

With vaginal art and seafood in the mix, it seems as good a time as any to talk about their upcoming marriage. True to form, the two got engaged with all the certainty and enthusiasm that saw Jack move in with Allegra. "We got engaged on Brighton beach completely by accident," Jack reveals. "Walking through The Laines we passed a jewellery shop, looked at each other and went inside. We'd already had a conversation about rings: Allegra wanted rose gold, I wanted a plain band with no stones. And there they were: two rose gold plain bands!"

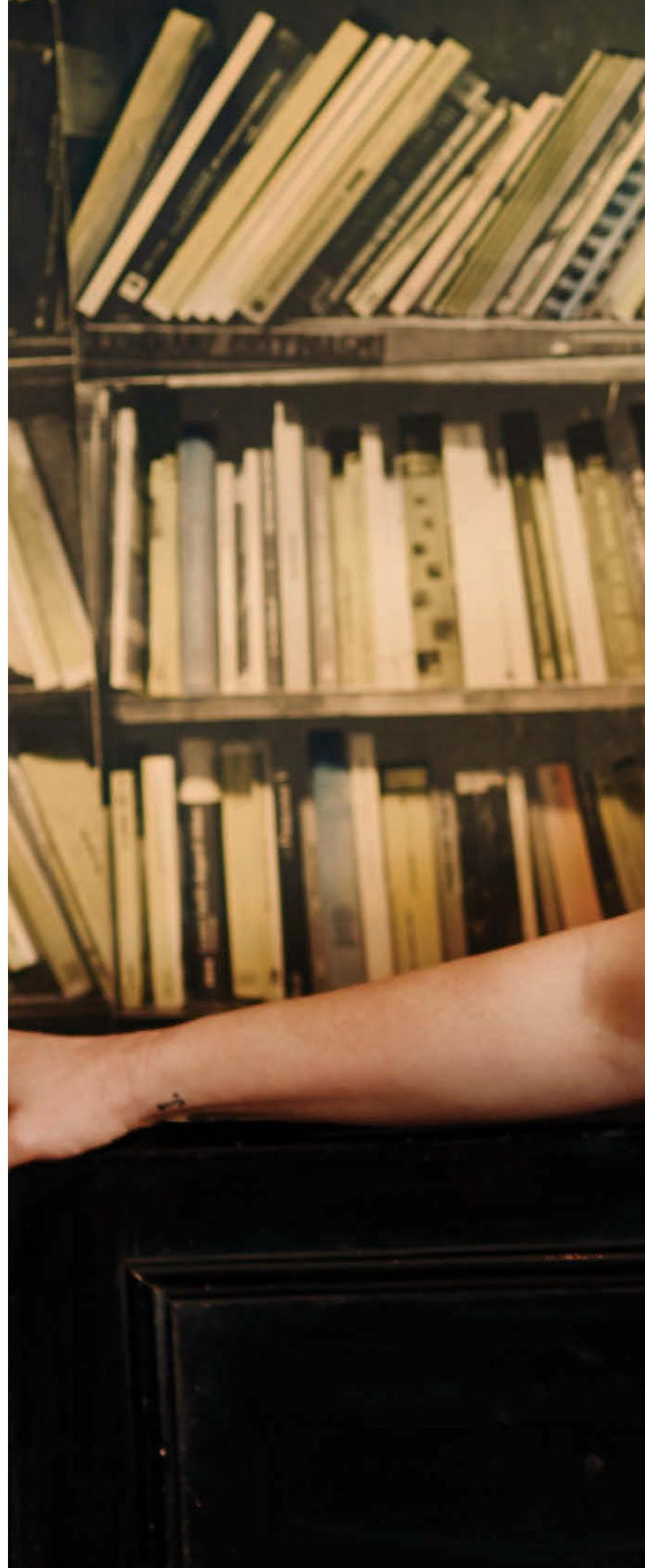
"So then we walked down to the beach, said a few words to each other, and put them on. As many of our friends have said since, 'when you know, you know,'" Allegra adds.

As we draw the interview to a close, I notice I'm feeling excited for the couple as they head into the future together. In readiness for our cover shoot, Jack and Allegra dash upstairs to find some tops to wear. When they come down, Jack flashes a cheeky grin and asks the make-up artist if she can re-apply her lip gloss. Whatever comes next in their story, I have a feeling they'll know how to make it fun. ☺

What was the first dish Allegra cooked for Jack? What ingredients make Jack go weak at the knees? Digital readers can find out in our exclusive video interview.

ALLEGRA WEARS
T-SHIRT BY RAG
AND BONE

"The full force of Jack Monroe is exactly what I signed up for and exactly what I want"



| COVER STORY | ALLEGRA McEVEDY AND JACK MONROE |



In it together:
Shelley Silas (left)
and Stella Duffy





This is what love looks like

"I felt like I'd been hit in the face when I met Stella," says Shelley, recalling the early impact of their relationship. "In a good way," she adds hastily. Stella cackles with glee: "Punched in the face by Eros!"

It's a cold day, shortly before Christmas, and Stella Duffy (51) and Shelley Silas (55) have abandoned their broken boiler to meet DIVA at a favourite spot near their south London home, Brixton's Lido Cafe. We sit outside, overlooking the open-air pool where Shelley swims year-round, and clutch our cappuccinos for warmth. Sweetly, the coffee is decorated with hearts in the foam.

The couple, who are both successful writers, got together 24 years ago

DIVA: How important is it to have a shared story about the origins of the relationship?

Shelley: After 24 years it's less important. **Stella:** *We've told it so many times it's almost like we're on automatic.* **Shelley:** The better story now is staying together and losing babies and having cancer and... **Stella:** *...boilers breaking down...* **Shelley:** But I think how you met is really important for the first few years. Maybe the first 10 years. After that it's like, fucking hell, we've been together this long, that's amazing!

WRITERS
STELLA DUFFY
AND SHELLEY
SILAS REFLECT
ON ALMOST 25
YEARS OF LIFE
TOGETHER
WORDS LOUISE
CAROLIN

but their relationship almost didn't happen; heartbroken by the split with a previous girlfriend, Stella wasn't at all sure she wanted to be with a woman again. She also knew she wanted children and in 1990, before the lesbian baby boom began, having a child outside of a heterosexual relationship seemed an impossibility. But when Shelley appeared in the audience at a comedy show, looking "bloody gorgeous" with leopardskin shoes and spiky Liza Minelli hair, Stella's reservations crumbled.

Their first six months together, they admit, was "bollocks".

"I fell in love with someone who'd recently done a photo shoot as Liza Minnelli and she fell in love with someone who was doing comedy on stage. We fell in love with dreams of each other," says Stella. They also moved in "way too soon", at five months, and both struggled to adapt to a shared life. "Now, if we're cooking together in the kitchen, it's almost as if we have a dance," Stella explains. "And you know you're not getting on when you can't dance. We were like pinballs [back then], smacking off each other! A lot of the time it was brutal. I'm astonished that we're still together sometimes."

Nor was it an easy time to step out into the world as a same-sex couple. "For all that we were trying to find who we were together, we were also very ►

DIVA: Have you ever had a moment where you thought that whatever had just happened meant the end?

Both (laughing): Yes! *Stella: My parents were really fighty. They had lots of rows. It didn't mean they were getting divorced. Shelley's parents were the opposite. So we would have a row and I would think, we've had a row - Shelley: And I would think, oh no, this is the end, I've got to leave! All the time. Stella: It's not just us, it's that people don't talk about it. People don't say that a relationship is hard, they don't say that there are times when you think, god, it would be easier to be by myself. It's quite easy to leave and it's harder to stay.*

much trying to find out who we were as a gay couple in a world that didn't want a gay couple," says Stella, adding that just going to look at flats together was "scary". And while her own white, working-class family accepted her sexuality, Shelley's parents, who were part of London's tiny Indian Jewish community, refused to meet Stella for many years. "It was really hard that Shelley's parents didn't accept me, having not met me – I can take people finding me the things that people sometimes find me, too big, too loud, whatever. But not even meeting me and deciding that they didn't like me – that was really painful."

"I used to lie awake thinking what would happen if they died, or Stella died, and they'd never known each other," says Shelley, who finally ceased attending family events although she still saw her parents on their own. "Stella never asked me not to see them and I wouldn't have stopped. I love them dearly and they're not bad people. But I'd been rejected and rejected."

It was the millennium and an invitation to join a Christmas get-together at Stella and Shelley's house that brought about an unexpected glasnost. "I remember all standing in the kitchen and it felt as though we had been blessed. I

didn't feel any hatred, I didn't feel any remorse, I didn't feel like, how dare you do this? I just felt like we'd been blessed. And we all had a little cry."

Amazingly, when it came, the embrace was absolute. "The minute my dad accepted Stella, he told everyone. I've got some quite religious relatives and he was like, I've accepted it, now you've all got to accept it. And they were like, um, we have accepted it." The pair laugh uproariously.

Vocal supporters of the campaign for equal marriage, Stella and Shelley were wed for the third time last year when they converted their civil partnership (their first wedding was a civil registration). Do they feel any different? "Stella doesn't, but actually I do," says Shelley. "I feel completely secure and grounded, like now we're completely legal."

As self-employed writers, how do the demands of their work affect their relationship, I wonder. "I don't like to say it's hard – my father was a boilerman and he was a labourer from the age of 14 – it's not hard work but we do work hard at it," answers Stella. "We are very privileged to work as artists but it's constant. We don't take time off, if we go on a holiday we work while we're away. I've never had a proper job in my life. I've never had sick pay. I've had cancer twice. My parents have died, Shelley's dad's died; we've never had compassionate leave. What that means is we're really sympathetic and empathetic with each other about how it is.

"There have been times when neither of us has earned, there's been times when both of us have earned well and times when one's earned well and the other's not. There was a time when it was quite hard to be taking the other's money. It felt difficult and uncomfortable. The more we've been happier with being a couple, the more that's been fine."

There was never a sense of competition ("our writing is very, very different") but sometimes disappointment when one achieved her goals and the other didn't. Age has taken the edge off the burning desire for success that she felt in her 20s, says Shelley: "We enjoy our life and we just get on with it now. I don't not want to be



PHOTOS CARRIE LYELL



Recently married for the third time, Shelley and Stella say relationships aren't easy; you have to work at it

successful and I'm never going to stop writing but our careers have grown along with us."

Although their spiritual beliefs differ, the couple agree that the fact that they both believe something has been crucial to the longevity of their relationship, even though it's not the same thing. "I don't think I could have loved someone who didn't have some sort of spiritual belief," says Shelley. Stella, who was brought up Catholic, has practiced Buddhism for 28 years. "When I die, I'll be going back into the universal life force," she explains. "Individual shiny Stella disappears. Shelley, however, believes we'll all be having cups of tea together! Like we are now! And meeting up with our old people."

"Given what we've been through, it's just as well we've had something else," says Shelley. Indeed, the pair have dealt with more than their fair share of illness and grief. Shelley speaks honestly of the impact of her depression on the relationship and the difference medication has made to her life, while Stella's breast cancer recurred in 2014. Cancer also took Shelley's sister Leah, and the couple have lost both Stella's parents and Shelley's father. The much-longed-for children were not to be; neither of them was able to sustain a pregnancy.

But the hardest times bring gifts, says Stella. "Having had cancer twice, having had the embryos made before

treatment last time, having lost all five of them, Shelley miscarrying and never getting pregnant, I see I am good with shit. I don't want to be good with shit but I am. I know that my being honest about having cancer and our infertility stuff has been useful to people because they've told me. So my choice is to try and find the value in stuff. Where are the gifts in this? And it's really fucking hard..." the words tear in her throat, as she looks across the table at Shelley "...to lie in St Thomas's Hospital, not sure

if I'll get to this end of the year, feeling like shit and terrified of dying and terrified of leaving Shelley, and think, where's the gifts in this?

"But there were my Buddhist friends chanting for me, there were friends who don't have any faith praying for me, there were strangers sending emails and tweets, just... there were gifts. There have been gifts, all year. The kindness of the people around us."

While her recovery was difficult, last year's cancer treatment was successful and she faces just one more reconstruction procedure. They are looking forward to a healthy year ahead "with nothing awful happening" and life together is still clearly full of excitement and joy.

What do you miss about each other when you're apart, I ask. "We dance! We dance in the kitchen, we dance in the lounge. We dance together," says Stella.

"I miss Stella's energy in the house. Stella's got such fantastic energy that the house is empty without her," adds Shelley.

Stella and Shelley. Here's to your dance, your fabulous honesty, your generous insight and your next 25 years. ☺

shelleysilas.wordpress.com

stelladuffy.wordpress.com

Stella Duffy talks to DIVA about her Fun Palaces project on p66.

DIVA: What advice would you give to a young couple who have just decided that they're in it for the long haul?

Shelley: Be patient with each other. Keep going. **Stella:** It's the same advice that we give to writers: keep going. **Shelley:** Get on with it, be patient, compromise. **Stella:** And don't keep trying to fix it. Don't go back and do those three chapters 85 times, get on with chapter four because you don't know what chapter four is yet. **Shelley:** And think about each other. Think before you speak sometimes. **Stella:** Because you're really good at that! (Laughter) **Shelley:** Try and put yourself in that person's place and actually say yes a bit more rather than saying no because you might enjoy something. **Stella:** Treat each other with compassion.



PALACES OF POSSIBILITY

Women's travel company manager Alanna Higginson first heard about Fun Palaces via a tweet by author Stella Duffy. The 46-year-old from Glasgow loved the concept – free events that make the arts and sciences accessible to all – and "took the plunge", signing up via the project's website.

Designing her own Fun Palace,

**EDEN CARTER
WOOD MEETS
SOME OF
THE WOMEN
BEHIND THE
FUN PALACE
PROJECT,
WHICH BRINGS
ARTS AND
SCIENCE
TO ALL**

Higginson took the Clyde as her inspiration. "The river has been the main artery of commerce here for many years," she says. "It's the lifeblood of the community, pumping blood to the heart of the city." Enlisting her partner, the singer Horse McDonald, and a couple of friends, she organised a picnic in Kelvingrove Park with participants reading their own poems about the river, a storytelling cycle ride and a postcard art display made

by many contributors and unveiled by Horse. This was the first time Alanna had arranged an event of this kind and she found the excitement and buzz inspiring. "It's fantastic to make a difference," she says.

Alanna's not the only one feeling inspired: in towns and cities across the UK, Fun Palaces are having a marked resurgence. The project dates back to the early 1960s, when theatre director Joan Littlewood and



Let's learn something new:
Fun Palaces in action at south
London's Brockwell Lido

"Both arts and science ask questions about the very nature of human existence"

architect Cedric Price conceived of a "laboratory of fun", "a university of the streets". The idea is refreshing in its simplicity: free local events run by and for local people, engaging with arts and sciences. Littlewood's dream never quite reached fruition during her lifetime, but thanks to facilitators like Duffy and a small core team driving a marketing and online presence, it's being revived, with at least 138 groups putting on events last year.

Fun Palaces are about empowerment, explains Duffy. She's not a believer in the "talent myth", she explains, that idea "that some people are more special, more talented than others". In the past this elitist belief has often led to the handing over of "the possibility of creating" to a small group of people, she says. "I believe that anyone can create and anyone should create." It's all about treating everyone as an expert in their own lives, she elaborates later, "rather than some of us behaving like we know better than everyone else".

Forty-year old Carine Osment also heard of Fun Palaces via Duffy. A medical assistance coordinator, she worked on the Farnham Fun Palace with Portuguese colleague Alexandre, neither of whom work in arts or sciences or had organised such a project before. "It was all brand new to us," she says. What appealed was the lack of barrier between "maker" and "goer" she explains. The most rewarding thing was "being an active part of something I would usually consider too big and complicated for me," she says, "and realising that some people will support you whatever and whenever. What matters is to try".

As well as aiming to empower individuals and bring them together, Fun Palaces also highlights just how much the arts and sciences have in common. "Both of them are asking questions about the very nature of human existence," Duffy points out, "and when you put them alongside each other, exciting things happen. People have conversations that they don't normally have," she says, "and that to me is where there is hope."

Importantly, Fun Palaces also encourages local people to use public spaces when possible. "So often public buildings – schools, art galleries – are empty in the evenings or weekends," Duffy explains. "We're

just not making good enough use of our spaces, and they belong to all of us. We're all paying for them in our taxes."

It's this spark of engagement and community involvement that makes Fun Palaces so special. Amie Taylor, 28, from South Norwood in London, liaised with local schools when working on the Brockwell Lido Fun Palace, led by Duffy's wife Shelley Silas. Amie's discussions with schools resulted in a day of workshops with 120 local children that aimed to raise their awareness of the Fun Palace project and involve them in the making of it. "On the day, my girlfriend and I ran shadow puppetry workshops at the Lido, in which children were invited to make puppets of a watery or autumnal theme," Amie says. The weekend was "full on", she recalls. "I loved wandering around taking part in activities, especially the ones brought by the scientists. I'm from an arts background, so it was a real treat to learn some science stuff."

If all goes according to plan, Amie will be back at the Lido again this year she says. The team wants to make something new: "Our community will have changed in a year's time, so it's about listening and looking for what is needed, what is being offered and to act on that." Both Carine and Alanna plan to be involved with Fun Palaces again too.

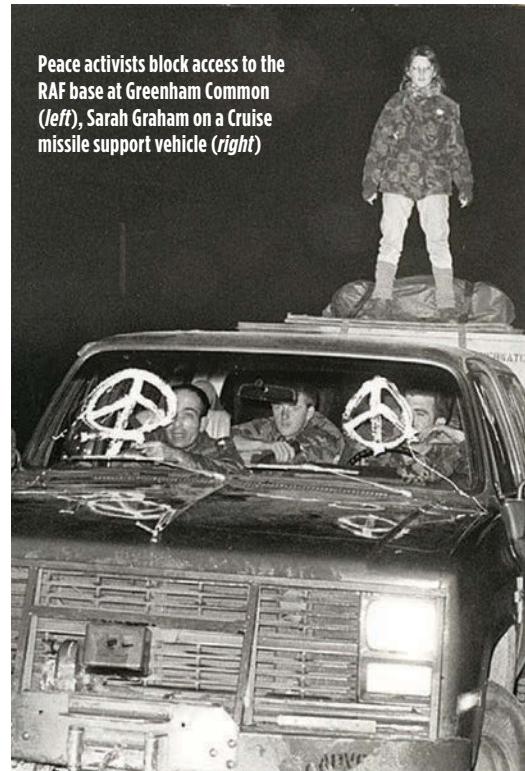
Duffy finds it interesting – but not surprising given statistics about volunteering – that 78.9% of those running Fun Palaces are female. She hopes that more teenagers will get involved in future and urges people who might be reading this and considering getting involved to "go for it!" One of the great things about Fun Palaces is that "it might be something it's impossible to fail at it," says Duffy.

"I think it's really important that we celebrate the small gains that people make, not just the vast ones," she adds. "It's really easy to celebrate massive successes, but in truth real lives are not about massive successes. They're about a small gain here, a small gain there, what have I learnt from it, what can I build on? That's what real life's like." ☀

Fancy getting involved? Find out more, get ideas and download resources at [@FunPalaces](http://funpalaces.co.uk)



Peace activists block access to the RAF base at Greenham Common (left), Sarah Graham on a Cruise missile support vehicle (right)



"GREENHAM BECAME HOME"

Sarah Graham's mother had no idea, when she took her to visit Greenham Common at the age of 13, that it would land her daughter in a prison cell before she had even finished school.

But Sarah, now a respected addictions therapist (see article, p86) who advises the government, has no regrets about her involvement in the peace protests. Indeed, she chooses to see her time inside as a "life-changing experience" that gave her a valuable understanding of the prison system. On a personal level, she says Greenham was very much part of her coming out process.

Sarah is not alone. Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp is on the programme for the First National Festival of LGBT History hosted by the City of Manchester this February. Social justice campaigner Sheila Standard will talk about her involvement, as part

CATHERINE MURRAY TALKS TO FORMER "GREENHAM WOMEN" ABOUT THE LEGACY OF THE ANTI-NUCLEAR PEACE CAMP

of a section on the key roles played by lesbian women in protest movements.

"From votes for women campaigns to the Greenham Common peace camps, lesbian women have been at the forefront of movements for change," says festival communications director Kim Foale.

The seeds of the movement were sown in 1981, when a small group of women walked 120 miles from Cardiff, Wales, to chain themselves to the gates of RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire, England. They were protesting against the government's decision to allow the US Air Force to site Cruise nuclear missiles at the military base.

From these humble beginnings grew an internationally-renowned, non-violent protest settlement, through which tens of thousands of women would pass over the next 19 years, some making it their perma-

nent home, others visiting for shorter periods of time.

Sheila will tell festival-goers about "what women did, in the face of this situation, and how it changed our lives and how we turned the military on their heads, by just stopping being what they wanted us to be". The freedom of expression felt by Greenham women also liberated many of them about their sexuality, adds Sheila. "I experienced through Greenham that I could be proud to be lesbian, and utter the word lesbian without shame."

Sasha Roseneil, Professor of Sociology and Social Theory at Birkbeck, University of London, has delved deeper into the transformational nature of the protests. Her 2012 paper (tinyurl.com/GreenhamResearch), *Queering Home and Family in the 1980s: the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp*, proposes that Greenham was, in addition

to an anti-military protest, also a "radically queer feminist intervention in the politics of home and family".

Sarah Graham's testimony corroborates this interpretation. "You had lots of interesting, politicised, engaged women, who were sitting around the campfire debating every issue you could imagine," she remembers. "It was a real opportunity to look at what was going on in the world and work out what the alternatives could be if the world was more women-centric."

"It was a very positive place to be as a young lesbian," she continues.

"There were loads of women who were lesbians and there were loads of women who became lesbians for the time they were at Greenham. I think lesbianism almost became a political statement in itself. There was a lot of experimentation going on [...] and a lot of freedom."

"But there was a lot of oppression as well. Greenham women were demonised by the media and the government really went after them."

Sarah, who subsequently pursued a career in journalism, references Greenham as an eye-opener with regard to "how the media didn't tell the truth". She sings me one of their camp-fire songs satirising coverage of the protests:

"We work for the Russians for tuppence a day / they ask us to stay so that's why we stay / We drink lots of vodka so that's why we're gay, hey!"

Prof Roseneil's paper argues that Greenham "queered the norms of political protest, testing the tolerance of the liberal democratic state that allows dissent as long as, at the end of the day, protesters pack up their banners and head home, back to their families".

Greenham women refused to go home, however, even under fierce attack from politicians and the tabloid press. "Greenham became home," explains Roseneil, "and the bonds of friendship, care and affection, and often sexual love, forged at Greenham became the life-sustaining forces that women were choosing over the families from whence they came."

Greenham had a lasting impact on many of the women who took part over the years. Bisexual artist and writer Emma Bolland (emmabolland.com), who visited Greenham Common as a teenager, says that seeing women

protest about issues of import, not "all the little shit that we are supposed to worry about and that supposedly makes us women" had "a massive effect on the way that I see politics, and in the way that I see the citizen in relation to the state".

Emma, who recently presented a paper at the Unofficial Histories conference (unofficialhistories.wordpress.com), says she also "came

away with the sense that struggle is and should be ongoing. Struggle is not delegitimised by the lack of obvious or short-term results. We might not win, but we must still fight and keep our eyes on what is honest and right".

Sheila Standard will be speaking at the People's History Museum in Manchester on Sunday 15 February, at 11.30 am, as part of the First National Festival of LGBT History. lgbthistoryfestival.org

MY TRANS LESBIAN HEROINES

ROZ KAVENEY INTRODUCES TWO WOMEN WHO CHANGED OUR LIVES

I don't know who Sylvia Riveira planned to sleep with that night at the Stonewall Bar, when everyone got fed up with police raids and she started throwing bottles; I do know that, like a lot of trans women, she ended up with a woman partner in the last years of her life. One of the things about being trans is that it forces a certain emotional honesty on you – once you've accepted that you need to transition, making other decisions about your life in general, and your sexuality in particular, becomes a lot easier.

The need to get through medical gatekeepers in order to access medical care often means that you conform a bit; I really wasn't lying to my doctors when I assumed, back in my 20s, that I was probably going to be one of those women who sleeps with men. I did know, already, that one of the key words in that sentence was "probably" because in those early days one of the most impressive trans women I had met was an out and proud dyke, the wonderful, the inspirational Rachel Pollack.

In the autumn of 1971, after I had done finals, I spent a lot of time in London doing research for my thesis, and the rest of my life. I got in touch with the newly founded Gay Liberation Front, hoping they wouldn't – unlike some other gay organisations – just tell me that I needed a good fuck with a nice boy to get all that trans nonsense out of my head. What I got from them was better – it was the phone number of the American woman who had started a trans group inside GLF and who lived in a flat on the street where I'd spent my childhood. I won't say she changed my life, not exactly ...

Rachel showed me and others that it was possible, almost mandatory, to be both a trans woman and a feminist and a radical. She also demonstrated that it was possible to be someone about whom one of the least

interesting things was that they were trans or lesbian.

She is a writer of science fiction and fantasy who has won both the Arthur C Clarke and World Fantasy awards; her run on the comic Doom Patrol for DC was ahead of its time in its use of diverse characters. Most importantly, as a student of Tarot in particular and spirituality in general, she's had a fascinating role in helping to build a feminist spirituality that's about helping women find a personal truth rather than telling them how they ought to be. For Rachel, Tarot is a set of images that you ask wisdom questions – if that helps you start your journey, that's not predetermined what that journey will be.

Rachel Pollack is my trans lesbian heroine, because she gave me and others the things we needed to set out on a path we got to choose for ourselves.

*Rachel Pollack's new novel, *The Child Eater*, is published by Jo Fletcher books in July.*

"Loads of Greenham women were lesbians and loads became lesbians for the time they were at Greenham"



Trans woman, feminist and radical: Rachel Pollack



"BISEXUALITY MEANS I AM FREE"

When I was four years old, if you had asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would have answered, "Kylie Minogue". By the age of eight or so, I had begun to understand that I didn't want to be Kylie Minogue; actually, I fancied her. I also enjoyed watching and re-watching Labyrinth with my then best friend. Hello there, dodgy crush on David Bowie as the Goblin King. I was a budding bisexual.

Later, in my teens, I dated boys; still later, I dated girls (then women); and finally, I also dated men again. By the

**WHAT DO
OUR LABELS
OF CHOICE
MEAN TO
BISEXUAL AND
PANSEXUAL
PEOPLE?**
**WORDS ROBERTA
CHLOE VERDANT**

time I found myself in a relationship with a man in my mid-20s, I had begun to really own the label "bisexual". I am attracted to some people: female, male, gender-fluid. I am bisexual and I am also queer.

Not long after I first began dating women I found myself giving thought to my sexuality itself: attending gender theory groups, becoming ever more aware of the gender norms I saw in the world around me. I would like to claim these actions as queer acts: assertions of my queer identity as I marked out

my own niche in an often heteronormative world.

I often use the labels "bisexual" or "pansexual" interchangeably to describe my sexual identity. However, whether single or in a relationship with a man, woman or someone genderqueer, I remain a queer person. Entering a relationship with a man does not make me straight; does not mean I cease to be bisexual or queer. Relationships with women also do not turn me into a lesbian. I am just myself.

I probably feel at my queerest when

I date men. It is too comfortable then for the world to read me as "straight". This is not my identity, so I assert that. Yet I notice how often other people try to define my sexuality for me (and how often we do that to other people). I choose my own identity. I allow no-one else to do that for me.

In his essay *Blatantly Bisexual*, Michael Du Plessis writes that he does not want to "impose anew the cliché of bisexuality as a borderline or borderland that affirms two, and only two, other identities that are to be understood securely in place". So I am going to explore bisexuality and pansexuality as queer identities: neither borderlines, nor a dipping in and out of the worlds of heterosexual and lesbianism, but occupying very clear spaces of their own.

As Carole A King puts it in *Bi Any Other Name*, "I use my bisexual wits to cross boundaries, crack codes, and bring back a store of information that society would like to use to keep us all in thrall ... It is the queer in me that empowers – that lets me see those lines and burn to cross them".

I spoke to bisexual- and pansexual-identified individuals, some of whom also additionally identified as queer, about their labels of choice; what do they see them as signifying? Candii, a café worker and MindOut volunteer from Brighton, writes that she chose "bisexual" because she is attracted to just men and women; though she finds beauty in all sexualities and gender identities.

Yet for Kayla, from London, her bisexuality feels like something private: she has predominantly had relationships with men. However, should she be in a relationship with a woman, she would be more vocally out; and not want to hide that part of her sexuality. Her bisexuality also subtly affects her world view: she questions the heterosexual set-ups and norms so many seem to view as compulsory.

Jennie Phillips, a performance artist from Devon, prefers the term "queer". She says: "Depending on who I am talking to I will occasionally use pansexual to indicate that gender and genitalia has nothing to do with who I am attracted to. I quite often sit under the bi umbrella so I can have a sense of belonging to a community and feel like I am being pro-active."

Growing up, Jennie never saw her

sexual identity reflected in the media or government policies, and still rarely does. Jennie sees heterosexuality represented everywhere (don't we all?) but feels her own sexual identity is constantly challenged. This only affords it increased significance in her life.

This is something to which I am sure many bisexual and pansexual people can relate. I see so few depictions of bisexuality in the day-to-day world; so I out myself to assert bisexual space. This space is, to me, an innately queer space. I hope I am doing my own minuscule part in making it visible.

Jennie's queerness has made her challenge everything to learn about others, question words, what is natural for her and what is imposed by society. This is her starting point for curiosity about the world, which spreads into activism and passion for equality.

Jan Steckel, an author from Oakland, California, says that when she came out in 1980, "bisexual" meant that she could love women or men. At that point, she had not heard the term "pansexual". Later, she found that being bi also meant "attraction to same and different genders".

In bisexuality and pansexuality, within a queer world view, I suspect many of us claim a kind of freedom perhaps not altogether comfortable for onlookers. Our choices of partners are not always easily guessable. Are we somehow a little dangerous? Defined by our labels – yet indefinable?

In this spirit, activist June Jordan explains: "Bisexuality means I am free and I am as likely to want and to love a woman as I am likely to want and to love a man, and what about that? ... If you are free you are not predictable, and you are not controllable. To my mind, that is the keenly positive, politicising significance of bisexuality."

Finally, what of the "born this way" argument that one frequently hears from gay women, but rather less (at least in my experience) from bi- and pan-identified women? Do we feel we do have a choice? A choice that means, should we wish, we could conduct relationships solely with the same or opposite gender and live our lives as straight women or lesbians?

Candii resonates with the "born this way" argument, seeing herself as having been born bisexual. However, she feels that sometimes she is seen

by others as having a choice; that she could choose to "fit in" and be "straight" or go against that and claim a gay identity.

For her, the problem (thanks to others' reactions) comes in asserting that she is bisexual and, as far as she is concerned, born that way. Yet others seem to want her to adopt a different sexuality. Once more, I am struck by this tendency of others to try to define us; this desire to relegate bisexuality to the realms of lesbianism or heterosexuality.

Kayla, though, believes there is less of a need for bisexuals to employ the "born this way" argument. Had she been born in a different time or place, where heterosexuality was more strictly enforced, she believes she may have happily lived her life as a straight woman, without feeling a need to question that heterosexuality.

Part of Kayla's sexual journey involved the discovery in her late teens that relating sexually to women was an option; and critically, far from taboo in her social circles. As she does not feel any need to construct an identity around her bisexuality, arguing she was "born this way" never entered her mind.

Jennie dislikes the idea of sexual orientation being accepted just because it is supposedly innate. To her, this avoids the larger issue of morality and excludes those who do have a choice, eg "political lesbians" and those who have experienced situational homosexuality (for example, in prisons).

For Jan, meanwhile, although she could have chosen to have sex only with a particular gender – right up until "her head exploded" – she would still have felt attraction to others too. "The equal opportunity wet dreams and the personal gender confusion. That part I didn't get to choose ... (It's just who I am.)"

For my part, whether I was born bisexual/pansexual/queer, or developed this way, I do not feel this is information which I need to know. I regard my sexuality as something positive. One of my driving forces in life is to feel as free as possible, whilst aiming to do no harm. I like how my sexuality meshes with this, my life and relationships subtly queered spaces, my sexuality as something both fluid and defined. Viva. D

I out
myself
to assert
bisexual
space

THE ART OF

WHETHER IT'S FOR YOUR LONG-TERM PARTNER, WIFE OR A ONE-NIGHT WONDER, EMBRACE THE MONTH OF LOVE, SHOW SOME SKIN AND IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE ART OF SEDUCTION...

WORDS AND STYLING BELLA QVIST, ILLUSTRATIONS MORRELL X (@MORRELL_X)



VINTAGE VAMP

Channel your inner pin-up girl in this deliciously decadent bra named after the original turn-of-the-century scandal celebrity and artist's muse Evelyn Nesbit. Featuring silk and lace, this is a soft yet supportive bra in a subtle bullet-style, and thanks to its daring cut it's sure to have your lover longing for more.

Evelyn Nesbit bra from Dottie's Delights
dottiesdelights.com



RED AND LACY

This deep red soft-style bra combines sporty comfort with sensual desire and is part of a collection that I simply crave this season. With a single-layer of mesh at the front, double layers on the side and lace from neck to bustline, this bralette creates a stunning look that can be incorporated in your outfit. That bit of lace poking out is enough to spice up any grey February day.

Eyelash lace inlay bra from Uye Surana
uyesurana.com



MS PLAYMATE

Did you ever see anything as adorable and exquisitely raunchy at the same time? Dottie's Delights developed this little number together with vintage style icon Miss Mosh and the mesh playsuit, which features a big bow tie and flattering material, comes with a gorgeous low-cut back. Perfect for teasing that very special Valentine of yours!

The Bow Playsuit from Dottie's Delights
dottiesdelights.com



SEDUCTION



FEMME FANTASTIC

Nestled in the heart of Covent Garden, Coco De Mer is a haven of lust and this set from the London's tease experts is no exception to the rule that less is more... Complete with suspenders and a provocative quarter-cup bra, this saucy number lets you embrace your inner femme fatale and is sure to get your lady's heart racing.

Aveta bra, thong and suspender from Coco De Mer
coco-de-mer.com



SEX BOMB

This striking set in sophisticated black delivers playful elegance with a bold sense of strength and sex appeal. Part of Pure Chemistry's debut lingerie collection, this extraordinary pair is bound to get your lover's attention in all the right ways.



La Liquorice bra and thong from Pure Chemistry
purechemistrylingerie.com



GORGEOUSLY GENDERQUEER



Soft, stretchy, sexy – these boxer briefs were made in a traditionally masculine style but with women in mind, incorporating a wider waistband and androgynous cut, which I absolutely adore. Play Out designs underwear for all gender presentations and identifications – hats, and pants, off to that!

Plexus boxer brief from Play Out
playout-underwear.com





Palm Springs is a Mecca for fans of modernist architecture

SAPPHIC SPRINGS

JOANNA
BENECKE
GETS HER
CELLULOID
KICKS IN PALM
SPRINGS

It's impossible to head to the Californian desert and not feel like you're in a movie. Several movies in fact. When the expansive San Gorgonio Pass Windfarm heaves into sight, hundreds of windmill arms waving at you in the arid desert landscape – otherwise mainly populated by cobby joshua trees and majestic mountains – you know you're approaching Palm Springs, AKA 3 Women territory. In this Robert Altman 1977 classic, *Pinky* (an awkward Sissy Spacek) obsesses about Millie (gorgeous Shelley Duvall) in the dry heat of the desert. As a wide-eyed blonde with a thing for brunettes, I channelled *Pinky* by blowing bubbles in my root beer as I waved at the wind farm.

A mere two hours' drive from LA, Palm Springs gained prominence in the 1930s as a getaway hideout for stressed stars who wanted to escape Hollywood while still remaining within shouting distance of their studio bosses. Delightfully, the city doesn't need designated LGBT highlights because, as Mary Jo Ginther from Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism puts it, "PS just is a gay city. It's integral to how it emerged; a place where people could come and be themselves". Although more famous as a gay male destination, you'll soon give up counting the number of lesbians you encounter in this gaytopia; but to maximise your gay giggles, catch local lez comedian Shann Carr (shanncarr.com) performing a gig, or come in September for Cinema Diverse, PS's LGBT film festival. In recent years a new generation of celebs have discovered the city's laidback charm, thanks in

"Everyone belongs here, no matter who you are"

part to the famous Coachella festival, so don't be surprised if you encounter Ellen and Portia nibbling veganaise on rye by the pool.

To best channel your inner Marilyn, book a room at the Riviera Palm Springs Resort & Spa; everyone who was anyone during the 1960s stayed and played here, from Sinatra to Elvis (rumour has it Elloria were considering it as a wedding venue before deciding on a home-based ceremony). There's no better way to recharge your batteries than at the hotel's Circa 59 restaurant where comfort food goes gourmet (think lobster mac 'n' cheese), with vegan options upon request. A few Anti-Oxidant Mojitos later (you know you're in Cali when the "healthy" cocktails come out) I was ready for a wonderful night's sleep in my king-sized bed. SpaTerre is well worth a visit if the detox booze hasn't quite worked – Kirsti worked her facial magic on my spots and Jessica's expert deep tissue massage carefully loosened all 11-hour-flight knots.

For a counterpoint to Hollywood Regency opulence, the so-quirky-you-could-die Ace Hotel is the perfect choice. With its reclaimed furniture, taxidermy, industrial showers and festival-chic luxury, you're basically in a Wes Anderson flick. Don't miss the Date Shake at the hotel's diner, King's Highway. To veganise, ask them to sub avocado for the ice cream! (acehotel.com/palmsprings).

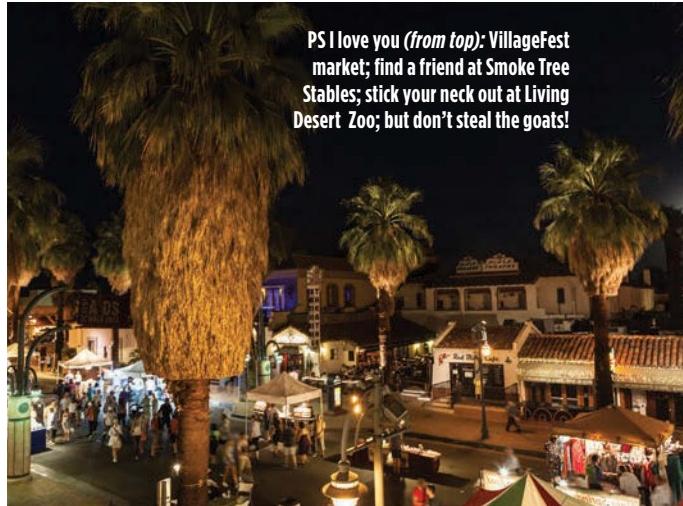
The best introduction to Palm Springs is a tour with local architecture aficionado Robert Imber (palmspringsmoderntours.com) who takes small groups on customisable trips. If you're not already a fan of mid-century modern, you will be after a few minutes with Robert. He'll explain how PS came into being and why it looks the way it does, before showing you where Katherine Hepburn, Kim Novak, Zsa-Zsa Gabor and the rest of the Hollywood hotties used to hang out. Golfer Dinah Shore – who lends her name to PS's (in)famous festival of women each April – lived in a prime example of Californian modernist design, which has recently been purchased and lovingly restored by Leo DiCaprio. Warning: post-tour you will be googling Californian mortgages. That's the Imber Effect. (And the lure of PS's 360 days of sunshine a year doesn't help/hurt.) Modernism Week celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2015 (12-22 Feb) and is a must for architecture buffs

(modernismweek.com).

For those who want James Bond-style hijinks, a ride up the sharp rock-face of the San Jacinto mountain in the world's largest rotating aerial tramcar is a must (pstramway.com). This thing travels fast, and the views as you hurtle up 8,500 ft are spectacular. From the mountain station you can head off on a hike, or stand on a viewing deck and play at being your Disney Princess of choice communing with local wildlife. I wanted to see a bobcat, but my Queen Elsa impression let me down. Luckily other local animals are more amenable, including the horses at Smoke Tree Stables (smoketreeables.com). Budding Calamity Janes should not miss the chance to saddle up, as there is no better way to explore the awe-inspiring mountain desert environment. Sample wild lavender and get your guide to give you a class in cactus 101! For even more animal encounters, a trip to the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens is a must. Cuddle goats, ride camels and feed giraffes at this ethical wildlife park (livingdesert.org).

Foodies are spoilt for choice in PS, with all tastes and price ranges catered for. Cafe Europa (cafeeuropanet.com) does a particularly delicious line in organic breakfasts, with options ranging from Twin Peaks (pancakes) to Showgirls (brown rice breakfast bowl) and a queer clientele including Lily Tomlin and wife Jane Wagner. My personal paradise is Native Foods (nativefoods.com). This all-vegan fastfood joint serves burgers, nachos and chilli, which appeased even the most confirmed meat eaters in my travel group.

Want to shop like Pretty Woman on a budget? Head to Desert Hills Premium Outlet (premiumoutlets.com). I went a tad crazy in the Asics shop (I basically thought I was Million Dollar Baby), while cut-price Michael Kors, Bose and Nike also draw big crowds. For those who prefer unbranded goodies, every Thursday PS's main streets are pedestrianised as VillageFest takes over (villagefest.org). This street market offers everything from local art, jewellery and clothes, to California's best dog-spotting opportunities. The owner of Cobber, an enormous wise-eyed Australian labradoodle, explained to me that PS is intrinsically welcoming because "everyone belongs here, no matter who you are". Like Marilyn, Garbo and Pinky before me, I couldn't agree more. ☺



PS I love you (from top): VillageFest market; find a friend at Smoke Tree Stables; stick your neck out at Living Desert Zoo; but don't steal the goats!

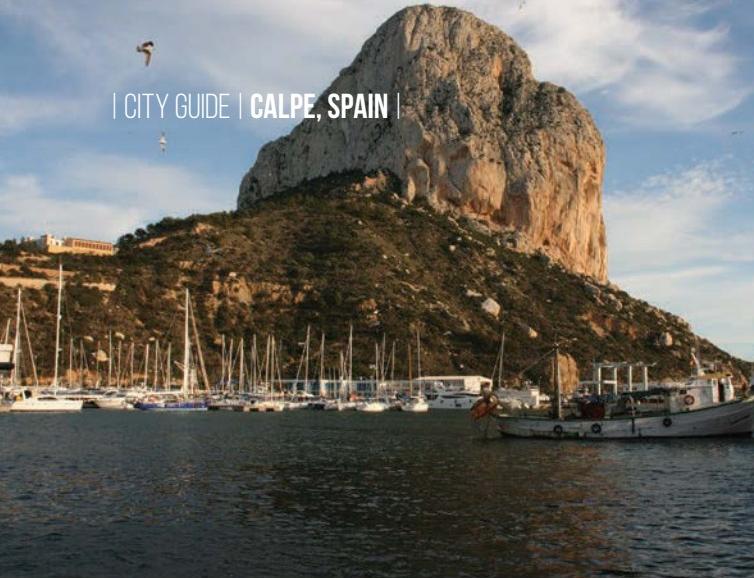


Virgin Atlantic flies daily to LA from London Heathrow. Fares from £663, virgin-atlantic.com.

Rooms at Riviera Palm Springs start from USD \$129 (approximately £82) per night, based on accommodation in a Riviera King on a room-only basis, psriviera.com.

For further information on Palm Springs, please see visitpalmsprings.com.





Calpe diem

This charming Mediterranean coastal town proves there's more to the southern coast of Spain than full English breakfasts in Benidorm – especially when the girls hit town for OlaGirls, an all-inclusive getaway in June.

STAY

Visitors to Calpe will be spoilt for choice when it comes to hotels. DIVA stayed in the gorgeous four-star Hotel Diamante (diamantebeach.com), just a hop, skip and a jump from the beach. If the selection of spa treatments doesn't tempt you, then the stunning views of the Peñón de Ifach (tinyurl.com/penyon-ifach) will. For couples looking for something a little more intimate, the Marisol (marisolphpark.com) is gorgeous and quaint, while groups may prefer Imperial Park Resort (tinyurl.com/ImperialParkResort), which boasts incredible views over the town and bungalows big enough for up to six people.

CARRIE LYELL
DISCOVERS
THE PERFECT
MEDITERRANEAN GETAWAY

PLAY

Calpe may be more sedate than party-hard neighbours Benidorm and Alicante, but there is still more than enough to keep you entertained. Energetic types can hike to the top of the iconic rock, 334 metres above the Mediterranean, and enjoy the spectacular views. While beach bums will be pleased to hear Calpe gets more than 2,800 hours of sunlight a year, and has many beautiful spots to sunbathe in. Water sports include diving, kayaking and windsurfing. I recommend seeking out Calpe's secret coves on a paddle board (supxperience.com). It'll turn your thighs to steel and you'll work up a healthy appetite, which is good seeing as Calpe has some incredible gastronomical delights on offer. The Valencian paella is a local speciality containing rabbit and chicken, and it's delicious. If you like shopping, the old town has some lovely boutiques. Other highlights include the daily auction at the fish


WAY
Direct flights to Alicante start at around £80 return, and there's a regular bus service from the airport to Calpe (£8 single) which takes two hours.

market, which has a specially constructed viewing gallery so you can watch the action below, several archaeological hotspots including an ancient wall dating back to the 13th century, and flamingo-spotting in Las Salinas.

GAY

In June, Calpe will play host to OlaGirls (olagirls.com), a brand new festival aimed at lesbian and bisexual women over 35 and their families. Organisers hope to create an "invasion" of all types of women looking for a different kind of holiday, whether you're sporty, shy or single. OlaGirls Getaway promises a unique experience, incorporating cultural activities as well as nightlife for the break of a lifetime. The extensive programme includes a treasure hunt through the town, a visit to Calpe's annual gastronomic fair and a guided tour of Peñón de Ifach, as well as dance classes, speed-dating and a "big lesbian kiss" flashmob. ☙

HOT HOTEL
**NIRA CALEDONIA
VALENTINE'S SPECIAL**



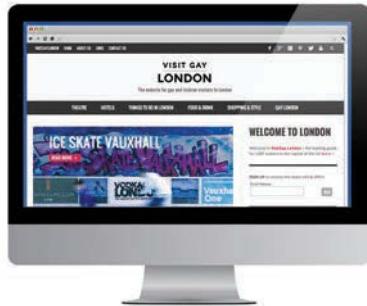
Edinburgh's sophisticated Nira Caledonia hotel is offering lovers a chance to celebrate St Valentine's Day with two nights' accommodation in a Jacuzzi Suite as part of their 50 Plaids Of Wa-Hay package. Your romantic weekend includes a full Scottish breakfast each morning (get it delivered to your room, if you prefer), a bespoke tasting menu in Blackwood's Bar & Grill downstairs, couple's aromatherapy massage, the services of a butler 24/7 and a Black Box containing strawberries, chocolates and a few other surprises ... Package from £995. Optional champagne bath £2,000. nircaledonia.com

NEWSFLASH

**NEW LGBT
LONDON GUIDE**

Whether you're new to London or want to see the city anew, a recently launched online guide for LGBTQ visitors will inspire. Visit Gay London provides information and inspiration to visitors and covers a broad range of both LGBT-specific and general interest areas. The main emphasis is on culture (primarily West End theatre and major exhibitions, but also music, dance, opera, museums and galleries) as well as attractions, shopping, hotels, restaurants and, of course, listings for LGBTQ bars and events. In the regular My London Life Q&A, LGBT Londoners share their tips.

visitgay.london | [@visitgaylondon](https://twitter.com/visitgaylondon)



WORDS LUCY FRY, PHOTO ANN-MARIE CAULHANNA (MARDI GRAS)

WINTER GAMES



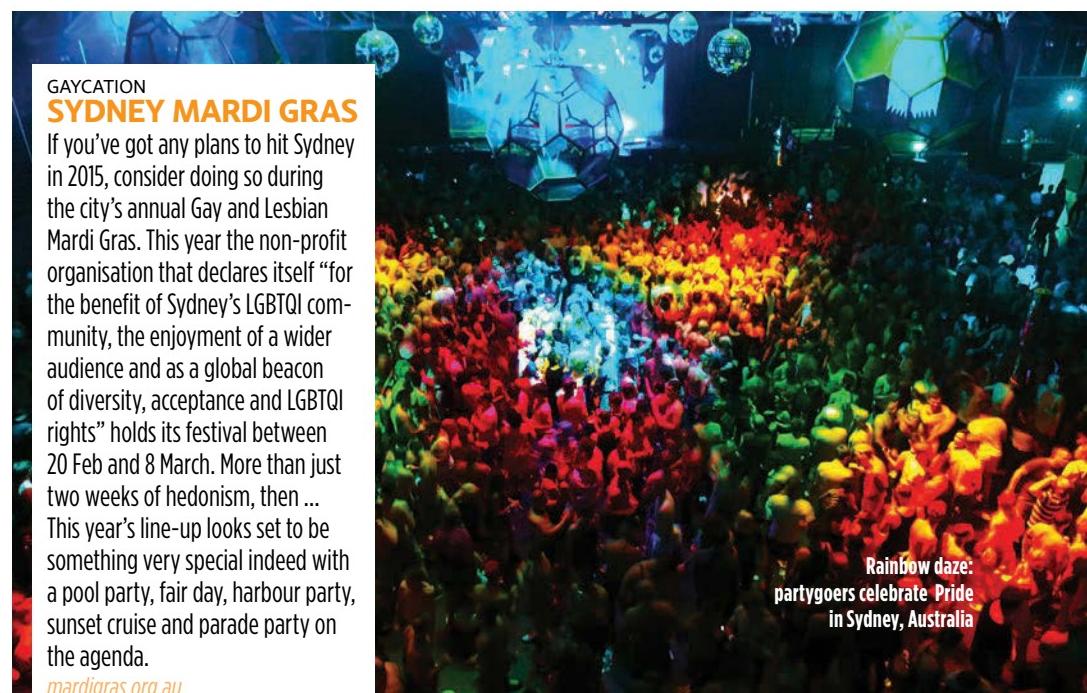
Coldhearted: women love winter sports at Whistler Pride and Ski Festival

DON'T MISS

WHISTLE-HER!

Take one Pride event, serve it up in the Blackcomb Mountains and add a side of Canadian welcome and you have the Whistler Pride and Ski Festival. From 24-31 January nothing is out of bounds at this mountain resort. Aside from all the fun you can have going downhill, fast, there will also be a range of lez- and bi-focused events going on off the slopes too, including Avalanche of Laughter with the Grammy-nominated Margaret Cho and the big women's Friday- and Saturday-night parties.

gaywhistler.com/events-whistler-pride-and-ski-festival



GAYCATION
SYDNEY MARDI GRAS

If you've got any plans to hit Sydney in 2015, consider doing so during the city's annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. This year the non-profit organisation that declares itself "for the benefit of Sydney's LGBTQI community, the enjoyment of a wider audience and as a global beacon of diversity, acceptance and LGBTQI rights" holds its festival between 20 Feb and 8 March. More than just two weeks of hedonism, then ... This year's line-up looks set to be something very special indeed with a pool party, fair day, harbour party, sunset cruise and parade party on the agenda.

mardigras.org.au

Rainbow daze:
partygoers celebrate Pride
in Sydney, Australia

Last Dance



Let's be honest, the scene in London was becoming a little... stale. So we couldn't wait to get ourselves down to the Truman Brewery for Last Dance, a super-cool mix of magic and mayhem.

The folks behind our new favourite night out want to make a name for themselves, taking some of London's hippest spaces and transforming them into unforgettable party destinations for ladies who love ladies, and December's event was incredible. As well as performance from Femme (who recently supported Charli XCX on tour), there were also DJ performances from the legendary Hannah Holland and fresh talent Izzy Trixx, plus cabaret, aerial performances, burlesque, fancy dress and a whole lot more.

Sad you missed out? Make sure you get yourself along to the next one. Keep an eye on their website for dates. **D**

lastdanceparty.com

THE FIRST
NIGHT OF A
NEW CLUB HAS
LONDON GIRLS
ALL LOVED UP





My Scene SOUTH LONDON



"WHEN NOT WORKING HARD AT DIVA HQ I LIKE HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS IN BRIXTON, WHERE I'VE LIVED FOR 20 YEARS NEXT MONTH"

LOUISE CAROLIN, 48

BEST PLACE FOR BRUNCH OR A COFFEE WITH FRIENDS

Amongst the fishmongers and wig-shops of Brixton Market you'll find dozens of tiny eateries that offer something for every appetite. I love Casa Morita for tasty Mexican dishes and Lab G for delicious own-made ices.

casamorita.com | brixtonmarket.net/brixton-village

BEST PLACE TO PARTY

Gotta love the RVT in nearby Vauxhall, a favourite queer hang-out since the 50s with a history that goes back to the days of music hall and beyond. This venerable venue hosts Duckie (rock 'n' roll honky-tonk since 1995) on Saturdays and Bar Wotever (royal queer variety show, all genders and sexualities welcome) on Tuesdays.

rvt.org.uk

BEST PLACE TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS

Eighty Three is a new club especially for bi women and their friends, from the girls behind Bijou. The crowd are cool and friendly, it's a great place for a relaxed after-work drink and there are loads of convenient places to grab a bite along Clapham High Street.

elysionevents.co.uk

BEST PLACE TO ESCAPE

Brixton's Brockwell Park has something for everyone, from the best kids' paddling facilities ever to a 50m outdoor pool. You can run, bowl, BMX, play tennis, football and cricket, or mooch in the walled garden. It's everything a local park should be. Look out for bi author and DJ Katy Watson's memorial bench near the hilltop cafe.

lambeth.gov.uk/places/brockwell-park | fusion-lifestyle.com



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CLASSIFIED FEATURE - PACE

INSPIRING BETTER LGBT+ RELATIONSHIPS AND MENTAL HEALTH SINCE 1985



Who we are

PACE is the LGBT+ mental health charity providing lesbians, bisexual, trans* and queer women with couples and individual counselling, new parenting support and relationship group work.

Love is a changing thing

At PACE, we know that love is a changing thing. You can know you love someone and still not know how to be with them. Being different from each other is both a wonderful and a terribly heartbreaking thing. Living with difference in a loving relationship is the issue that comes to counselling again and again.

Kath Blake Counselling Service Manager at PACE says: "Every day I see people coming into counselling feeling worn out by what's happening in their relationships and feeling powerless to stop it."

"Some people are struggling with ordinary issues and some with extraordinary things. For some, it's all about how to make time for

themselves and their relationship in the midst of a busy work and family life. Others are facing the repercussions from an affair, the effects of grief, the demands of work or stress. Others may be trying to work out how to negotiate spending time with, or having sex with, other people outside of their relationship. There are as many issues as there are people."

"At whatever the stage of a relationship – beginning, middle or end – counselling and groups are a way of clearing the path, restoring love and hope - finding ways to make a difference in people's lives. In some ways, it's just that simple."

What we think

The quality of our relationships dramatically affects how we view ourselves and how we deal with things. Having healthy relationships in our lives significantly improves the quality of our wellbeing and even our physical health.

Working with a specialist LGBT+ therapist at PACE can allow you to really hear each other to

help you get through the tough times. Building solid foundations within your relationships helps you create a relationship that works for both of you.

To do this, you can attend couples counselling at PACE or come along to a free weekend couples workshop where you will meet other LGBT+ people in similar situations, and will be guided through facilitated sessions to help you deepen communication and work through conflict in a more positive way.

The next workshop for couples takes place on 31-1 February and is free to attend. Many couples use this as the first step to improving the quality of their relationship before working with a relationship counsellor.

To book on to this workshop contact

Lorna.Fulton@pacehealth.org.uk

If you would like counselling for yourself, or for you and your partner go to *www.pacehealth.org.uk* or call 020 7700 1323.

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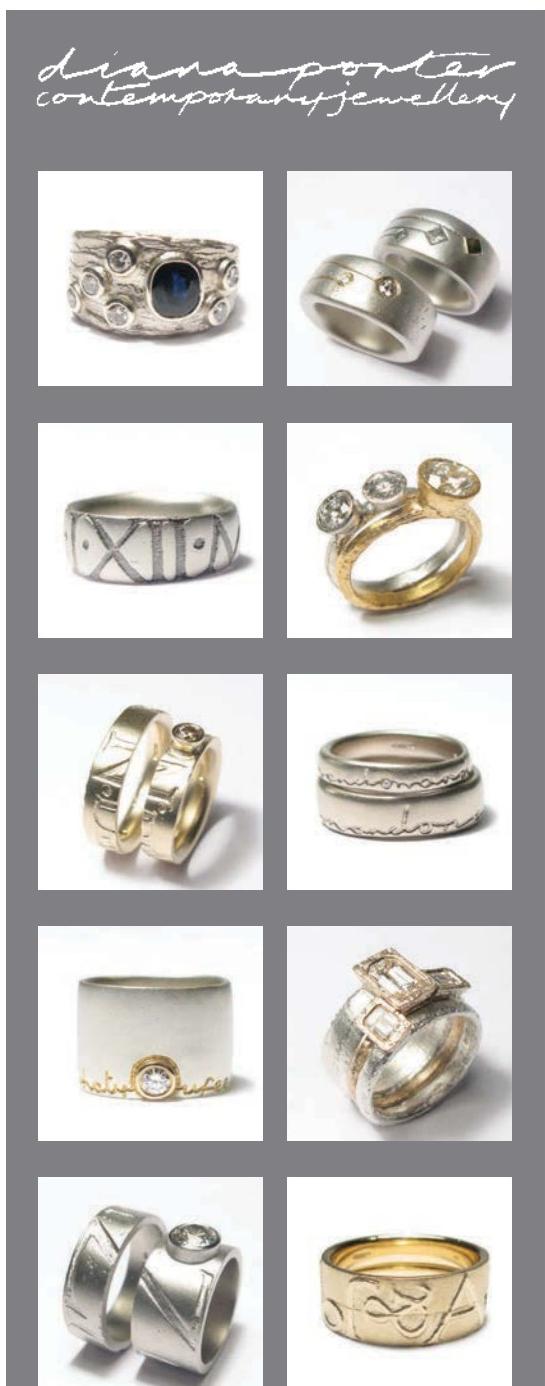
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CLASSIFIED FEATURE - GOODRICH BESPOKE

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If you've not had bespoke tailoring before, what can you expect?

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You will meet Kerry to discuss your requirements in detail – talking through fabrics, design style and fit. Following this initial appointment, your cloth, lining and trimmings will be ordered in and Kerry will draft and cut a pattern, making up the suit ready for your first fitting, all done on site in the studio.

Stage 2: Fittings

At the first fitting your suit will only be part made, and you will be able to see the canvas and "inner workings" as it begins to take shape. Kerry will mark up any alterations which may be necessary, and following the fitting, will take the suit apart again, re cutting and, making any changes before putting it back together for a second, more advanced fitting.

Stage 3: Final fitting

Your suit is finished! This final fitting is an opportunity for both of us to ensure we are completely happy, and make any minor adjustments if needed.

www.goodrichbespoke.co.uk

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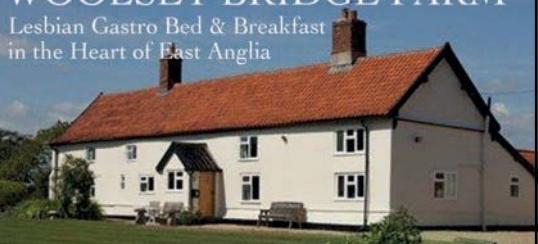
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Giving it up



When I set up my company, Sarah Graham Solutions, in 2009, the first client through the door was a 16-year-old binge-drinking

lesbian. She was referred to me by her godmother who'd heard me give a talk to DrugFam, a cool charity that supports the families of those affected by addiction, during which I'd shared a little of my own story about growing up queer in Wiltshire.

My new young client was overflowing with anger and was turning it against herself and society. She had dropped out of schooling and been arrested twice for serious violent behaviour – including hitting her girlfriend, which she did during blackout.

This young woman had been bullied from years eight to 11 for having a gay friend and being gay by association. Once she stood up for him and was punched hard in the mouth by a boy. She reported homophobia to the head of year on a regular basis. No action was taken.

Growing up in an unsafe environment where you are always different creates toxic levels of shame and other harmful emotions. When I asked my client what alcohol meant to her, she replied, "Freedom". That's a powerful reason to get hammered. Coming to see me, I'm sure that a lot of the healing that took place in our therapeutic relationship wasn't just because of my counselling skills. It happened because of my being an out LGBTI woman – a

happy, positive role-model and knowledgeable about LGBTQI issues.

Our therapeutic alliance affirmed and nurtured her sense of self. She felt safe to reveal her pain and anger and I reflected to her that what happened in school was not ok. She wrote to the headmaster and is now free to be herself – without needing alcohol as a crutch – and has made a fresh start in life.

I have a lot of empathy for people with addiction because I am a recovering addict myself: I started drinking at 12 and by 14 I was smoking cannabis and doing speed and acid. A lot of the drugs and booze were given to me whilst I was being groomed by a paedophile.

Like many women with addictions, sexual trauma and abuse is a big part of my story. When I came out, aged 17, I'd had years of being bullied and assaulted for being a "dirty dyke" at school – an everyday occurrence – and this was part of the reason that I went from being an A-grade to an E-grade student and dropped out of school by 16.

I got clean in rehab, aged 32, and retrained at the Priory as an addictions counsellor. When I went into schools to work with drug-using pupils, the thing that shocked me most was the amount of homophobia that's still present in playgrounds today. Even more surprising are the teachers and heads failing to act to protect their LGBT young people, and those straight kids deemed to be "so gay".

There's strong evidence that homophobia negatively impacts on young LGBT people's mental health. Stonewall's Prescription For Change:

THE ROOTS OF ADDICTION CAN LIE IN THE TOXIC SHAME CAUSED BY HOMOPHOBIA, SAYS SARAH GRAHAM

Lesbian And Bisexual Women's Health Check found that half of lesbian and bisexual women under the age of 20 have self-harmed, compared to one in 15 teenagers generally. We are more likely to commit suicide and abuse drugs and alcohol, and are less likely to access health services.

With the advent of social media and living in a celebrity- and image-obsessed world, addiction is ever more rampant – and not just to drink and drugs. People are addicted to food, sex, relationships, exercise, shopping, porn, work, gambling, self-harm, anger, adrenaline. The list goes on... And there still is very little in the way of NHS treatment available for us; most of the treatment budget goes on methadone for people who use crack and heroin.

This is why my gay colleague, therapist David Smallwood, and I have set up an LGBT addictions and recovery group at 140 Harley Street, London. David recently wrote an excellent book called Who Says I'm An Addict? and by joining forces with him to run this open group on Tuesday evenings (6.30pm for a 7pm start) we hope to provide an incredible, affordable healing opportunity. There is nowhere else on Harley Street you can get to work with two of the best addictions therapists for twenty quid (less than a round or a gram!).

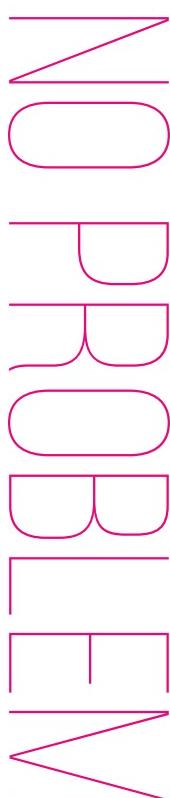
Sadly, everyone knows someone who needs some help. Please let them know about us. 

I started drinking at 12 and by 14 I was smoking cannabis and doing speed and acid

For more info email
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DIVA editor Jane Czyzselska is a qualified integrative counsellor, registered with the BACP. Jane cannot offer individual responses or answer every single question. Please note that by submitting your question to Jane, you are giving your permission for her to use your question as the basis of her next column, and your story will be shared on Facebook for advice from readers. Jane may not be able to tell you that she is using your question, but will try to email you the reply if she does. All questions will be kept anonymous and key details and facts may be changed to protect your identity. You can find out more about Jane's counselling services at shoreditchtherapy.com



IF YOU'VE
GOT ISSUES,
WE CAN HELP

READERS' REPLIES

OMG, get a different job closer to your partner. She can't leave her dependents but you are free to work nearby. Please don't lose your partner just for the sake of a job. It will hurt both of you.

Virginia Salter

I think it's best to ask yourself if in the long term it would benefit you to call it off now and maybe stay friends or whether you can't picture ever being without her? You just

PHOTO HOLLY FALCONER

don't want to get another four years down the line and end up resenting each other any more. Also, you don't want a strained relationship because then it impacts other areas of your life, such as work, family, finance and your happiness. At the end of the day, relationships are important, but you are 27 and don't want to waste your life, you need to live it. And maybe that might be with someone else.

Alex Thomson

HOW CAN I CHOOSE BETWEEN MY JOB AND MY RELATIONSHIP?

Dear Jane,

I am 27 and my partner has just turned 39. We have been together for four years this coming January and have had a lot of ups and downs in our relationship, mainly due to the fact that we live hundreds of miles apart. We have been fortunate in that we could see each other frequently whilst I was unemployed although this had its obvious drawbacks, with depression being one of them for me.

Although money was tight and I was very depressed and lacking self confidence as a result of being unemployed, we enjoyed our time together and made the most of it. After two years I eventually got a job, a placement, that helped me to build up my confidence and get me back into the world of work in the field I want to work in. It was great to be in work and my partner was very supportive as she could see how down I was constantly. However, my new job meant I had less time for her and we struggled to see each other as much. Now I have taken a new job which is even further away and it takes a day's travelling to get to each other.

To place further strain on our relationship, my partner is a full-time carer for two family members and cannot move to be closer to me or to live with me. I want to live with her and have a life together but cannot ask her to leave her family as I know she would end up resenting me eventually.

I love her family and have a fantastic relationship with them but I don't think they can see the strain they are putting on my partner and our relationship. I am worried that I am coming to a point where I cannot cope with the distance anymore and want more from my partner, so have started to push her away. I don't want to but I can't stop myself because ultimately there is no "win" in this situation, is there?

Regardless of our relationship and how I feel, I am also worried that my partner is going to have a breakdown with the stress that she is under because of her family and

because of the way I feel.

We talk a lot and go round in circles and it frightens me that the only conclusion is to let her go because I don't want to spend my life in a relationship with someone that I can't really have.

Help!

Dear Help!

I'm sorry to hear about your depression, which when combined with job loss and being apart from your significant other can really make life seem very bleak.

It sounds as if you are experiencing a really difficult conflict. On the one hand, you say you love and want to live with your girlfriend yet on the other you are worried about how to make this happen and if you do, how will you feel? Will it place undue strain on you? If you move to be closer to her, either in her family home or nearby, you will have to change your job and move home, and possibly for you this will mean moving away from friends and family members.

Your letter is full of anxious thoughts about the future. The first thing to think about is how much you really do want to stay with your partner and what you are willing to compromise on to make your relationship possible. If you decide you really do want to be together long-term then I suggest you tell her and then talk about how the two of you might work it out in a manner that means that both of you get as many of your key needs met as is currently possible. Try to see it from your partner's perspective too. What would you want if you were in her shoes? It doesn't sound as if you feel you have flexibility to relocate and I wonder why? Does your partner live somewhere you couldn't follow your chosen profession, perhaps? If this is the case, and moving closer to her would leave you feeling resentful about that, then perhaps this is not the relationship for you.

Jane



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The Bartender

Nina sat at the bar, swirling red wine around her glass. The steady beating of drums burst into the room, followed by a loud cheer. Brightly coloured saris and elaborately embroidered scarves clouded her view but she just caught a glimpse of her cousin's beaming face as he walked his new wife through the crowd. She sighed.

"Another drink?"

It was dark behind the bar, dimly lit by candles and low lamps. The voice stepped forward. Nina was already tipsy, but nodded and smiled at the face in the dark. She could just about make out the lines of muscle through the white shirt sleeves and for a moment she imagined those arms wrapped around her tiny frame, holding her tightly in an intimate embrace. She shivered and tried to look away, but her eyes drifted back to the shapely bottom wrapped in tight black trousers. She giggled and looked down as another large glass of wine appeared in front of her.

"Thanks," she muttered before taking several large sips. Two delicate hands were either side of the pump in front of her. She twirled a few strands of long black hair between her fingers, looking down into the glass and feeling her heart beat faster. She took a large gulp of wine, flicked her hair over her shoulder and flashed a seductive smile at the bartender.

"Do you have a name?"

The bartender leaned forward so their faces were close.

"Rav."

They looked into each other's eyes for a brief moment before Nina turned away with an embarrassed laugh, feeling her cheeks flush scarlet. The woman behind the bar smiled.

"Something wrong?"

She had piercing green eyes and creamy olive skin. Nothing like the girls at the wedding with their long silky hair and glamorous dresses, but beautiful. Nina couldn't look away.

"No nothing, I just..."

"Thought I was a bloke?"

Nina quickly shook her head, but Rav was laughing. She leaned further forward and Nina found herself leaning slightly towards her too.

"So you meant to flirt with me?"

Nina's face was on fire. She looked away. "No, I'm sorry."

"Oh. That's disappointing." Nina looked back up. The woman's face was inches from her own. "I was going to ask if you fancied coming back here for a ... quieter drink?"

Rav had a mischievous sparkle in her eye and Nina felt a tingling sensation run all over her skin. Maybe it was the wine, or just those hypnotic eyes. Either way, she found herself draining her drink and walking through the bar into a darkened back room, as if in a daze. The room was lit with candles and faintly scented with vanilla and spice. Rav sat down on a leather sofa and Nina let her eyes wander over the woman's muscular body. She felt a sudden unexpected burst of desire and launched herself forward, pressing

**ATTENDING
A FAMILY
WEDDING
SOLO, NINA IS
INTRIGUED BY
AN UNUSUAL
WOMAN**

SHORT STORY
TAURA MOON

her lips against hers. Rav held her back with strong arms for just a moment, brushing the hair away from her face before gently slipping her tongue into Nina's mouth in a deep, passionate kiss. Nina melted into the curves of Rav's body and didn't resist when she felt her dress fall away. She soon felt the cold leather of the sofa on her naked back as Rav lightly ran her fingertips down from Nina's neck to her pubic hair. She was already soaked. She followed the trail back up with her tongue, massaging her breasts with both hands as she kissed her neck. Rav was still fully dressed and Nina tugged at her shirt but, weak with pleasure, didn't have the energy to remove it. She gasped when she felt the warm tongue flicking between her legs. Rav licked her slowly at first, enjoying Nina's writhing and moaning for more. She gently circled her clit, gradually getting faster before flattening her tongue and rubbing hard and fast, making Nina cry out from the intense orgasm. She had no time to recover and took a sharp intake of breath as she soon felt two fingers slide into her. Nina clawed at Rav's back as she thrust into her over and over, rubbing her clit with the heel of her hand making her come again and again in sweet ripples of pleasure until she finally clung onto her so tightly they were forced still to catch their breath. In the quietened room, the "first dance" music drifted in through the thin walls. Rav stood up and smoothed out her clothes.

"Another drink?"

The bar-tender leaned forward so their faces were close

1 Make your environment as sensual and comfortable as you can: soft lighting, a warm room, and a cushioned bed or futon mattress to lie on. It's also about making this space special by removing anything that could distract you from having your full focus on your partner. This means no mobile phones in the room, put the phone ringer on silent, turn off the laptop and maybe even cover any TV or computer screens that are left in the room. If you want to go the extra mile, bring in some fresh flowers and candlelight. You may also want some seductive music: just bear in mind that lyrics can sometimes be quite intrusive and choose your tracks thoughtfully.

2 Once you've set the scene, think about what other props and equipment you might need. Towels are a good idea to cover the area where you'll be doing the massage. You can use massage oil, coconut oil or corn flour/corn starch for the massage (check if your partner has any allergies to any of these substances first). Also have some personal lubricant to hand: unflavoured and unscented water-based lube is best. A small bowl of warm water lets you "reactivate" the lube if it starts to dry on the skin. If you are not fluid-bonded, and you plan to have genital contact, have some latex or vinyl gloves available for a safer sex protocol. Finally, gather together any other sensuous props you want to use: a piece of fur or silk can create amazing sensations when trailed over the body (before any oil is applied).

3 All of these preparations assume you already have willing consent from your partner. It can be lovely to surprise them but do make sure that they are happy to go ahead. Think about how you might like to make your offer. How about: "I'd like to spend some time

IN THE
FIRST OF AN
OCCASIONAL
SERIES OF
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TO" GUIDES,
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worshipping your gorgeous body!" or simply, "May I give you an erotic massage?" Find out if there are any areas off-limits. Being pre-menstrual can make the body more sensitive to touch and, for example, your partner may prefer it if you don't touch her breasts. They may prefer you not to touch around the throat, or to avoid their feet if they find them unbearably ticklish. Find out by asking: "Are there any parts of your body you don't want me to touch?"

4 Before you begin to touch your partner, make sure that you are both fully present. You may want to take a few deep breaths together, and gaze into each other's eyes for a moment or two. You could also begin by standing face to face and holding hands, or with a full-body, naked embrace.

Anna writes about sex every month in DIVA magazine and online at divamag.co.uk. Email anna@divamag.co.uk or tweet @ladygarden69

5 You don't have to be a professionally trained bodyworker to give an erotic massage. The aim is to enjoy touching your partner's body in a slow and sensuous way. This isn't the type of massage that focuses on working out tight knots of tension or soothing aching muscles. The two most important components of erotic touch are presence and communication. Touching another consciously – and being the recipient of conscious touch – is an incredible gift. Really pay attention to what you are doing: the texture and temperature of their skin; the sound of their breathing and any other sighs or purrs; and the feeling of connection between the two of you. If you want to know how your touch is being received, watch how their body moves, listen for any sounds and remember that you can always ask (but try not to ask too many questions –

HOW TO GIVE AN

EROTIC MASSAGE

trust that you are both enjoying the sensations).

6 Begin the massage by making a gentle connection with their body. You can start with your partner lying on their front or back. Place your hand lightly on their upper or lower back, over their heart, or on their stomach. Give them a moment to get used to your touch and relax into it. If you want to incorporate other materials, this is the time to do it. You could slowly and sensually trail a satin scarf over their skin, or stroke them lightly with a feather. The whole body is an erogenous zone so think about their arms and shoulders, legs and feet, face and hair. When you are ready, sprinkle the corn starch over their skin, drizzle the oil onto them or let some of the coconut oil melt in your hands.

5 WAYS
to celebrate your
lesbian love on
Valentine's Day:
tinyurl.com/DIVA14Feb

7 How you touch is very personal to the two of you. Be guided by how you want to touch them and what their reaction is to the touch. Massage the whole of their body. You can use your fingertips, the palms of your hands, your forearms, your breasts, your own torso sliding against theirs...

8 Take your time building the energy between the two of you before you move to their genitals. This is the point to put on your gloves if you are practising safer sex. Gloves can also be extremely sexy even if you are fluid-bonded as they act as another texture and sensation to play with. Continue your massage using lubricant instead of the oil/corn starch. There are lots of different ways you can massage genitals. (The book Urban

Tantra by Barbara Carrelas has excellent, detailed instructions on how to give an "erotic awakening massage for people with pussies and people with penises") The key is remembering that you can touch the whole of their genitals (as long as they have consented to this). Think about massaging their pussy lips, gently tugging their pubic hair, using your breath to huff warm air over them, or using a vibrator as well as your hands. Vary your strokes and the sensations and allow the erotic energy to build. It's also important to allow moments of stillness. See what their body does when you still your hands for a moment: do they arch up to meet you, rock their hips, or place their hands on top of yours? Remind your partner to keep breathing. Breath circulates the erotic energy. If their usual style of coming is to tense everything and hold their breath, see if you can encourage them to stay relaxed and keep breathing.

9 There doesn't have to be an orgasm or a climax to this experience but, equally, your partner may wish to follow the sensations through to an orgasm. When you are both ready to end the massage, you can cover them with a sheet or blanket and allow them as much time as they want to lay still and absorb the experience.

10 What happens next? You may go on to make love or fuck together. Your partner may want to massage you. They may want some quiet time, a shower, or to be wrapped up in blankets and allowed to sleep. You may want to cuddle together or make a snack. Bear in mind any safer sex protocols as you end the session and clean up. Finally, try to allow the experience to be whatever it was for each of you. There's no need to dissect it, or to ask lots of questions. Try to stay in the moment and enjoy the sensual, loving and erotic feelings that have been created. ☦



MAYBE MORE

BOYISH SINGLE PARENT

F, 52, enjoys the gym, fishing, pool, nights in/out, seeks honest F, similar age, for f/ship, maybe more. Swindon. Box 271087 ☎ DV 271087

AMIABLE, HONEST

F, 45, seeks genuine F for good f/ship & r/ship. Slough. Box 188074

SINCERE, QUIET

F, 61, GSOH, has two dogs, seeks F for good f/ship & further. N. Ireland. Box 660622 ☎ DV 660622

ATTRACTIVE, FULL-FIGURED

F, 57, bisexual, well-spoken, seeks F, similar age, for fun times & more. Cotswolds. Box 173410 ☎ DV 173410

LIFE, LOVE & HAPPINESS

Sincere, loving F, 56, seeks lovely, laid-back, feminine F to share life, love & happiness. Exeter. Box 623594 ☎ DV 623594

OUTGOING, FRIENDLY

F, 57, full figure, bisexual, seeks F, similar age, for fun times, nights in & more. Glocs. Box 992306 ☎ DV 992306

HONEST, EAGER

F, 43, seeks F for long-term, lasting r/ship. Darlington. Box 204027

HONEST, SINCERE

F, 50s, likes days out, animals & cosy nights in. Seeks feminine, gay F, 40-60s, for fun & hopefully r/ship. Notts. Box 161268 ☎ DV 161268

SENSUAL, HONEST

F, 52, medium build, seeks F for good times, maybe more. Soton. Box 499883

GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 75, non-drinker, seeks F companion, GSOH, with car, for cinema, good food & more. Devon. Box 828190

100% GAY

F, 54, seeks solvent, gay F for good laughs & r/ship. Mancs. Box 870496 ☎ DV 870496

GENUINE, FUN

F, 54, WLTM decent, solvent F, 45-55, for plenty of laughs & maybe r/ship. Mancs. Box 322602 ☎ DV 322602

DEEP, PASSIONATE

F, 54, seeks stimulating F with something to say for conversation & more. SE Ldn/anywhere. Box 269592

BABYFACE FEMALE

Lonely F, 37, seeks mixed race F for good lasting r/ship & shared future. Coventry. Box 100798 ☎ DV 100798

TEETOTAL, HONEST

F, 72, n/s, likes holidays, socialising & conversation. Seeks loving, caring F for good r/ship. Lancs. Box 822209

BI-CURIOS, SOCIALE

F, 32, likes socialising & partying. Seeks F to see what happens. Ldn. Box 470300

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POSITIVE, OUTGOING, PROFESS

F, 51, seeks F for dancing in the kitchen, dog walks on the beach, good food, laughter & romance. Newcastle. Box 436275 ☎ DV 436275

GENUINE, HONEST & FUN

F, 42, 54", slim build, WLTM random, nice Fs. Mancs. Box 293527

COSY NIGHTS IN

Sincere F, 62, medium build, likes animals, walks & some reading. Seeks n/s F/ship & good r/ship. Warwicks. Box 73509 ☎ DV 73509

SPIRITAL, SINCERE

F, 38, single mum, likes travel & writing. Seeks F for coffee, chats, possibly intimacy & more. Co. Down. Box 861404 ☎ DV 861404

CREATIVE, SENSITIVE

F, 53, GSOH, seeks adventurous F for r/ship. Ldn, anywhere. Box 589011

HONEST, LOYAL, CARING

F, 62, n/s, large build, enjoys walks, theatre & film. WLTM F, 60+, for a forever r/ship. Kent. Box 704273

CREATIVE, OUTGOING, FUN

F, 30s, staffie owner, loves Djing, clubbing, singing, drawing & socialising. WLTM loyal, mixed-race F for r/ship. Cov. Box 783205 ☎ DV 783205

FEMININE, YOUTHFUL

F, 51, GSOH, thoughtful, n/s, has ME, likes animals & mystery. Seeks understanding, caring F, 38-55, for laughs+. L'pool. Box 913989 ☎ DV 913989

GROUNDED, GENUINE

F, 38, seeks F who is kind to strangers & keen to share their best memories with someone special. London. Box 223704 ☎ DV 223704

LOVING, LOYAL, FAITHFUL

F, 41, n/s, enjoys all the good things, seeks F, 36-48, for f/ship, fun times & maybe more. Devon. Box 868555 ☎ DV 868555

LOUD, PROUD, CONFIDENT

F, 40, bubbly, likes dance & films. Seeks F for wild nights out & passionate nights in. Milton Keynes. Box 273975 ☎ DV 273975

FUN, TOMBOY

F, 36, likes football, cinema & nights out. Seeks feminine F, 30-40, for r/ship. Mancs. Box 798661 ☎ DV 798661

FRIENDLY, PLUMP, PRETTY

Bisexual lady, 61, seeks similar F for fun times. Gloucs. Box 237013

RELATIONSHIP OR FUN

F, 45, likes laughs & tennis & other sports. Seeks F for fun & r/ship. Mancs. Box 154893 ☎ DV 154893

DARK-HAIRED, SOCIALE

F, 45, 51", medium build, likes socialising, travel & motorbikes. Seeks similar F for r/ship. W Ldn, Surrey. Box 187431 ☎ DV 187431

ATTRACTIVE, FEMININE

F, 49, likes the gym, reading & holidays. Seeks feminine lady for good r/ship. Yorks. Box 999700 ☎ DV 999700

SINCERE, BLONDE

F, 37, single mum, seeks honest, loving F for real r/ship. Kent. Box 853359 ☎ DV 853359

LIPSTICK LESBIAN

Attract, easy-going F, 50s, likes most things, seeks sim late 40s-50s F. Text preferred. Gloucs. Box 704295

CARING, LOYAL & HONEST

F, 69, loves good books & conversation & WLTM a free-thinking F with a sense of fun for f/ship, maybe more. Fife. Box 342583 ☎ DV 342583

JUST HAVEN'T MET YOU YET

Caring, genuine F, 53, 5'3", likes the outdoors, holidays & the coast. Seeks similar F for laughs & r/ship. Cheshire. Box 220543

BISEXUAL

F, 58, seeks lady, 45-60, for f/ship, maybe more. Nottingham. Box 957270 ☎ DV 957270

YOUNG-AT-HEART FEM

F, 51, likes most things, seeks similar F for f/ship, maybe more. Glocs. Box 403344

SOFT BUTCH

F, 53, bubbly build, seeks down-to-earth, feminine F, 50+, for a quiet, normal life. Bristol. Box 801751

GENUINE, CURVY

F, 36, likes cinema & roller skating. F, 45, likes food for good times & more. E Anglia. Box 538084

LOVING, CARING, GAY

F, 52, likes meals out, cinema & walks. Seeks caring, loving F for r/ship. Lancs. Box 745729 ☎ DV 745729

KIND, CARING

F, 45, likes cats, seeks F for loving r/ship. Stockport Box 442022

FEMININE, SINCERE

F, 60, n/s, likes cinema, her dogs & walks. Seeks similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Cornwall. Box 289505 ☎ DV 289505

VERY OUTGOING

F, 55, loves travel & the outdoors. Seeks gentle, feminine F, similar age, for great, loving r/ship. Devon. Box 527387 ☎ DV 527387

GENUINE, SINCERE

F, 20, 5'3", seeks F for good times & intimacy. Glasgow. Box 252315

HONEST, BISEXUAL

F, 49, 5'4", large build, seeks nice lady for f/ship & maybe more. Powys. Box 807825

ENTIRELY HONEST

F, 55, 5'10", has a dog & cat, likes long walks, a bit disabled, seeks F for good r/ship. Darlington. Box 381150

OUTGOING, BUBBLY

F, 49, fun, likes nights in/out & socialising. Seeks similar F for great r/ship. Co. Down. Box 657198 ☎ DV 657198

KIND-HEARTED, HONEST

F, 33, 5'8", medium build, likes walks, cinema & nights in. Seeks lovely F for r/ship. Co. Antrim. Box 194316

SINCERE, HAPPY

F, 50s, likes gardens & travel. Seeks nice F for something intimate. Belfast. Box 372189

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 62, likes animals, quiet evenings & occasional meals out. Seeks F for loving r/ship. Herts. Box 405562

HONEST, AFFECTIONATE

F, 23, likes walks, films & good wine. Seeks F for good times & r/ship. Glasgow. Box 459448

AMOROUS, EASY-GOING

F, 48, likes the coast, cinema & animals. Seeks similar F for good r/ship. Glocs. Box 563608

SOCIALE, SINCERE

F, 36, seeks feminine F, 30-40, for theatre, meals out & close times. Mancs. Box 978625 ☎ DV 978625

CUTE, GENTLE, BUTCH

F, 40, black, shaved head, cuddly build, seeks honest, feminine, loyal F for f/ship & maybe r/ship. W Mids. Box 507405

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 39, seeks feminine F for f/ship & possible r/ship. Notts. Box 736789 ☎ DV 736789

CHEEKY, LOVING

F, 52, feminine, likes meals out, football & walks. Seeks F for good times & r/ship. Lancs. Box 794840

FUN-LOVING, EASY-GOING

F, 40, likes laughs & nights out. Seeks similar F for fun & f/ship+. Mancs. Box 583561

CARING & LOYAL

Fay F, 58, smoker, seeks special feminine gay lady for a close r/ship. Mansfield/Notts. Box 132991 ☎ DV 132991

HAPPY, BI-CURIOUS

F, 48, blonde, loves doing nice things, seeks nice F for socialising, laughs & intimacy. Mancs. Box 115157

SOMETHING WONDERFUL

F, 22, sociable & sincere, has a cat, likes gardening & animals. Seeks bubbly F, similar age, for something wonderful. Essex. Box 721492

GOOD CONVERSATION

F, 49, seeks F, 40-50, with good outlook, for good conversation & plenty of laughs. Mancs. Box 177389

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 19, likes the arts & music, looking for caring F for loving r/ship. Humberside. Box 782392 ☎ DV 782392

SOCIALE, HONEST

F, 19, smoker, social drinker, likes reading & country walks. Seeks F for r/ship. Glocs. Box 454386

SINCERE BLONDE

F, 67, likes gardening & travel. Seeks F, similar age, for close times & more. Ldn. Box 898375

BISEXUAL, SINCERE

F, 19, single mum, likes walks & swimming. Seeks nice F for fun times & more. Lancs. Box 983054

HONEST, BUTCH

F, 47, loves animals, seeks F for days out & great nights in. Newcastle. Box 538737

NO STRINGS

FEMALE'S RULE!

F, 22, seeks F for great times. B'ham. Box 556726

SPECIAL, WARM PERSON

F, 51, likes culture, theatre, socialising, not a big drinker, seeks F for good times, socialising & intimacy. Edinburgh. Box 143401 ☎ DV 143401

SENSUAL, FEMININE

F, 43, bisexual, seeks similar F for sensuality & experimentation. S. Ldn. Box 59109

NEW TO THIS

Inexperienced F, 51, seeks F for fun times. Soton. Box 467075

JUST FRIENDS

LIFE BEGINS...

Animal-loving F, 33, seeks friends for socialising, laughter, intelligent conversation & a little bit of mischief. Somerset. Box 757543 ☎ DV 757543

SINCERE, TRUSTING

F, 48, likes the outdoors & learning Spanish. Seeks F for chats & genuine f/ship. Ldn. Box 359170

RELATIVELY NORMAL

F, 52, loves animals, drives, gigs & travel. Seeks F for socialising & f/ship. Kent. Box 491009 ☎ DV 491009

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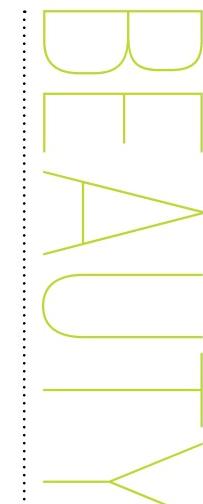
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WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ORGANIC?

JOANNA BENECKE TAKES THE PANIC OUT OF GOING ORGANIC

When it comes to food, organic means organic, as producers are regulated. It's all or nothing: you can't label an apple as organic because only half of it was sprayed with pesticides. Unfortunately, the organic grading of cosmetics lags behind our eats, with no centralised rules in place. I recently bought a hand soap proclaiming ORGANIC! on its label, however, upon closer inspection, I found that only 11% of its ingredients were organic and many of the others were far from natural. Until the beauty industry sorts itself out, careful label-reading is called for in order to ensure you're getting what you think you're getting. Many of the best ethical brands (eg Green People and Nourish) feature easy-to-spot organic percentages on their labels, telling you exactly how organic each product is. Unsurprisingly, these are also brands which have high levels of organic ingredients (no one wants to brag about being 11% organic). Companies can also choose to be certified by an independent body, such as the Soil Association, Ecocert or COSMOS, which is a clear indication that they take their organic status seriously (although small companies can't always afford it).

It's important to note that non-organic ingredients don't have to be bad. Water, for instance, can never be organic, as it's not agricultural and can't be grown, but is used in almost all cosmetics. Salts and minerals are also not grown and therefore never organic, so while a salt bath soak can be all-natural, it's not organic. Additionally, several ethical companies carefully choose which ingredients to source organically and are open about their reasoning (awesome water-free company Lyonsleaf make their case here: lyonsleaf.co.uk/organic-vs-natural).

When looking at a product claiming to be organic, red-flag ingredients include: PEGs, sodium laureth sulfate, silicones (dimethicone, cyclopentasiloxane), mineral oil, paraffin, isododecane, isohexane – as well as ingredients with names ending in "paraben", or "eth" followed by a number (eg laureth-9). If any of these are present, the product would not achieve organic certification. I should point out that opinion is divided as to whether these chemicals are harmful or not, but some studies have shown links between these ingredients and hormonal changes, allergies and even cancer. You will probably be using them daily – in soap, shampoo, toothpaste, washing-up liquid – so to escape them completely is a bit of a mission. If you are concerned, anything you don't wash off your skin – moisturisers, serums, lotions – is a good place to start your organic usage, because your body is bound to absorb more of those products.

BRAND OF THE MONTH: NOURISH

Scientist Dr Pauline Hili (*pictured*) spent years developing formulations for Neal's Yard before deciding to launch her own natural skincare range. The result is vegan, affordable, certified by the Soil Association and features a very high percentage of organic ingredients. Pauline has even worked out how to channel the benefits of celeb-superfood kale into cosmetics, creating a vegelicious range including handcream, cleanser and eyecream! My inner gay Gwyneth rejoiceth.
nourishskinrange.com



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BONUS DIGITAL CONTENT IN THIS ISSUE:

THIS MONTH WE'VE GOT AN EXCLUSIVE VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH COVER STARS ALLEGRA MCEVEDY AND JACK MONROE TELLING US ABOUT "COME TO BED CARBONARA" AND MUCH MORE! ADDITIONALLY, CHECK OUT THE VIDEOS FROM BIRD LA BIRD, EVAN EFEKOYA AND OUR HILARIOUS TRAILER FOR NEW LGBT TV SERIES BANANA.

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As it's the Love Issue and I spend a lot of time propped up in front of a computer, now is as good a time as any to take a good look at what I'm doing to love the body I've been given. And the answer is, not a lot. So, I've dusted off my trainers and downloaded some fitness apps. Here's what I learned...

Rhoda Meek is an IT consultant and designer with a social media addiction, a crochet habit, a RaspberryPi and two left feet.

wodieskodie.com
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WHAT'S
YOUR CURRENT
GEEKY OBSESSION?
LET ME KNOW!
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HELL, NO!

PAVLOK

OM actual G. This is a device directly from the devil, in my book. Pavlok is a fitness tracker with teeth. Not literal teeth, but not far off. It hits you with voltage instead. For example, if you don't get up on time, it will give you an electric shock. The same goes for hitting fitness and workout goals. Not my idea of fun, but those of you with a taste for kink might enjoy waking up that way.

pavlok.com



IT'S
NOT
A
COUCH
TO 5K

BODY TALK

RHODA MEEK TESTS TECH THAT HELPS YOU LOVE YOUR BODY – IN THEORY

COUCH TO 5K

Lord knows, I like my couch, but I've always wanted to be one of those svelte runners floating smugly past in the dawn light, and this app promised to get me running 5km in nine weeks. Starting with walking and light jogging, its step-by-step programme aims to gradually increase my fitness in only three training sessions a week. It's rained most days and I have shin splints, but it is beginning to work.

Free, iOS, Android, c25k.com



APPS I LIKE

APP I RESENT

GYM PACT

This is the kind of app someone thought up whilst remembering how they were threatened with getting their pocket money being stopped if they were bad. Gym Pact fines you if you miss your goals. There are three different types of pacts – gym pact, veggie pact, food logging pact – to help you stay in shape, eat more veggies and log your meals. You can choose to commit to one or all of these pacts. They use GPS, photos and other services to keep you honest. I'm an adult. I resent it. You might not.

gym-pact.com



POCKET YOGA

I do like a bit of yoga, but I don't like classes. Someone pointed out I didn't need a class ... They were right. Pocket Yoga is the way to go. Using both audio and visual guidance, the app guides you through any of 27 routines. It leaves me calm, relaxed and, if I'm honest, sleepy.

£1.99, iOS; £1.89, Android, pocketyoga.com



KGOAL

If you're exercising, lord knows you shouldn't forget about your lady parts. Thankfully we have KGoal Smart Kegel Trainer. It turns out that tools to help women exercise and manage their pelvic floors are extremely lacking. KGoal is a device and app providing a fun, interactive platform to guide, measure and track your pelvic floor exercise.

It's like having a personalised gym and tracking system in the palm of your hand, or up your ... never mind. Games will be coming shortly, I'm told. Pre-order at minnalife.com – it could be the ultimate Valentine's gift for the woman in your life! There's an interesting vibrating lemon available, too ...

...AND FINALLY



dimension! Vogue houses will be throwing shade for trophies once again. Evening bags = a must.

contactmcr.com

7.02

SHARE THE LOVE

York Castle Museum, York

This LGBT history event intends to bring history out of the closet. Share stories, memories, keepsakes and objects with curators and archivists to unearth the queer history of York.

yorkcastlemuseum.org.uk/your-visit/events

7.02

STORMY WEATHER

Wedgwood Rooms, Portsmouth

Kate Tempest doesn't fit the mould. She bulldozes through her performances half-singing and half-rapping. Watch her perform work from her new album *Everybody Down* on the coast this February.

katestempest.co.uk

9.02

RADICAL THINKERS

Tate Modern, London

What happened to the new worlds of possibility promised by the women's liberation movements of the 20th century? This panel addresses the legacy of feminist art and theory and its enduring relevance to contemporary struggles.

tinyurl.com/TateFeministArt

10.02

POLAR BEARS

Contact Theatre, Manchester

Paul Burston's glittery literary salon gath-



19.02

SWEET HOMO ALABAMA

Islington Assembly Hall, London

Brittany Howard is a babe. That is all.

alabamashakes.com



ers as part of Queer Contact festival. See the crew chin-stroke and effervesce on the best gay fiction, new and old.

contactmcr.com

14-15.02

YOUR HISTORY!

*Citywide venues,
Manchester*

Manchester stages a weekend of events marking LGBT people in history. Celebrate three centuries of LGBT culture and enjoy the opportunity to see past representations of queerness.

lgbthistoryfestival.org

14.02

CRAFTY

Sutton House, London

Join Amy Grimehouse and friends on

crappy Valentine's Day for some witchcraft, voodoo and general debauchery. Screening (o)cult 90s film *The Craft* followed by Connie Francis on the turntables. Particularly thrilled by the idea of a Craft craft room.

tinyurl.com/ValentinesGrime

20.02

PANDA, GUN, GIFT

The Star of Kings, London

GIRLS is commandeered by GTFO (girls to the front, ok?) and provides a safe space for the busting of moves to sick beats. Soundtrack inc girl-bands, woman-fronted bands, female artists of various persuasions think riot grrrl, pop-punk, motown/60s and Taylor Swift obvs.

starofkings.co.uk

21.02

ANNE HISTORIC EVENT

York St John University

Lesbian history comes to life with We Are Theatre Company's contemporary retelling of the true tale of 19th century landowner Anne Lister. Based on her own diaries, The Anne Lister Play reveals Anne as the Shane McCutcheon of her day. (That's an L Word reference, newbies.) Part of York History Month, yorklgbthistory.org.uk.

tinyurl.com/DIVAAnneListerPlay

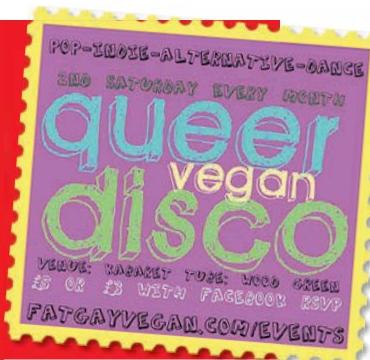
14.02

VEG OUT

Karamel, London

Join Fat Gay Vegan and guest DJs for a night of camp, queer fun. Queer Vegan Disco propagates a mix of pop classics, indie anthems, alternative tunes, dance music and more commercial stuff. 100% vegan bar serving beer, cider, wine and spirits all night.

facebook.com/LondonQVD



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PHOTO VALENTINA FRUGUELE

DESIREE AKHAVAN

Meet "the bisexual Lena Dunham", director/star of Appropriate Behaviour and newcomer in season 4 of HBO's GIRLS

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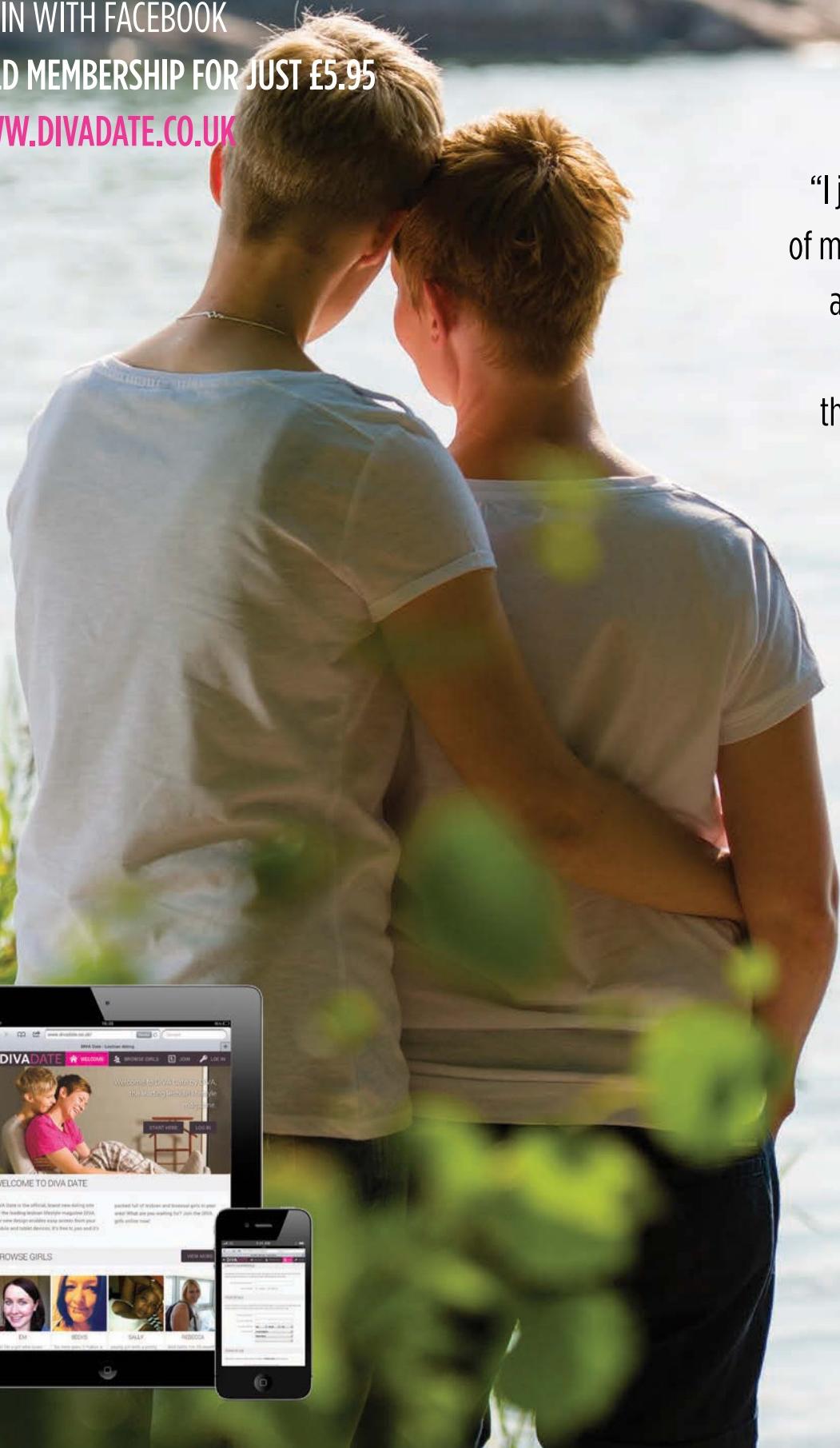
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30 MAY 2015

For more information and to register online:

www.actionforcharity.co.uk

01590 677854

events@actionforcharity.co.uk

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